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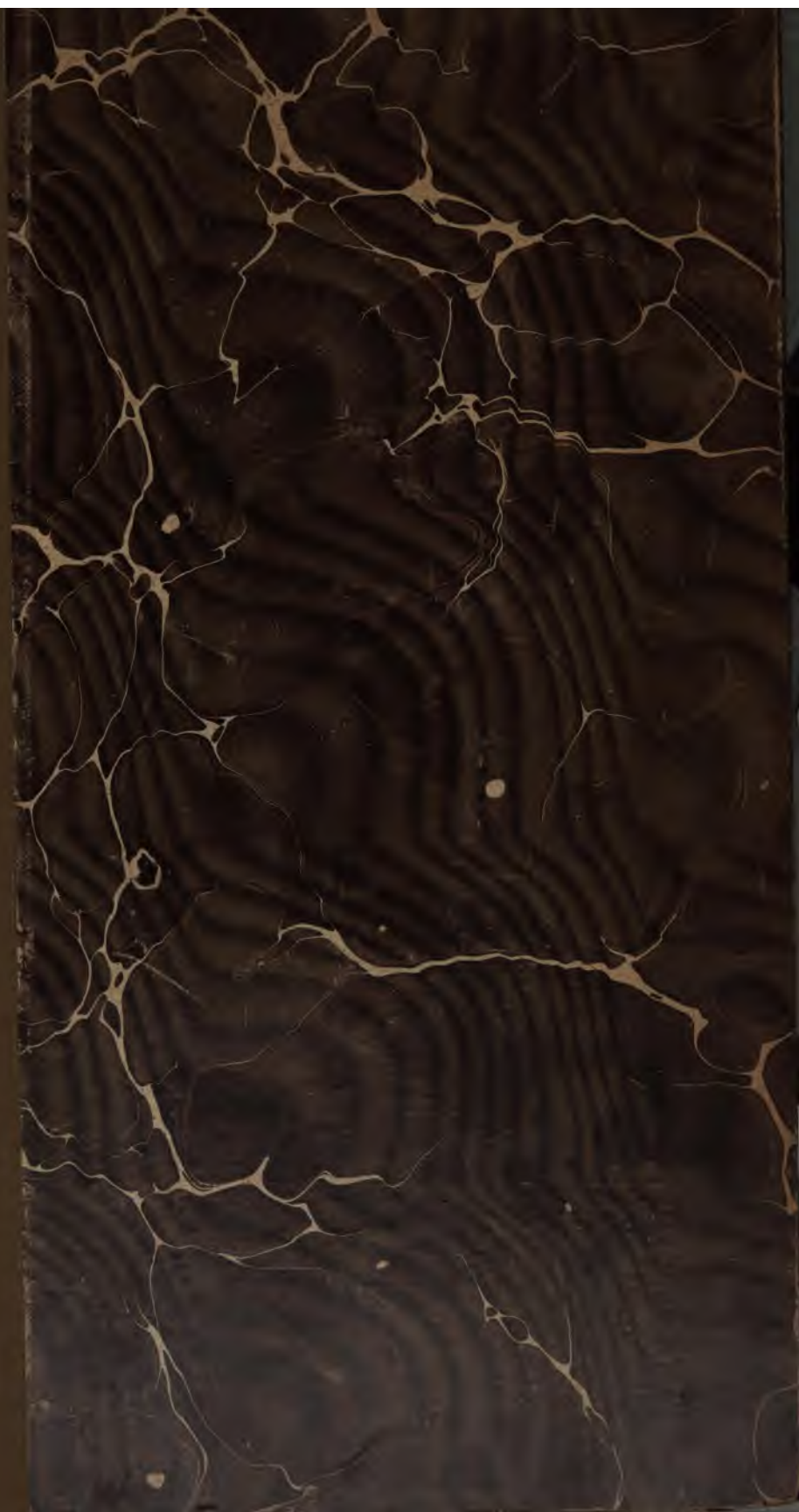
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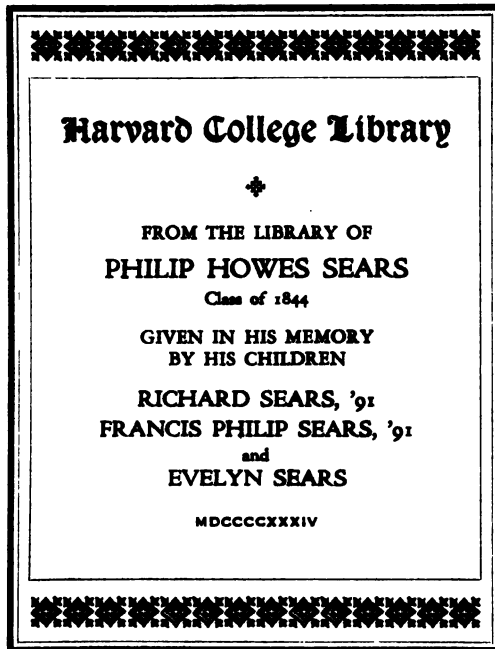
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On the Character of the Rev. T. Belsham - 1830

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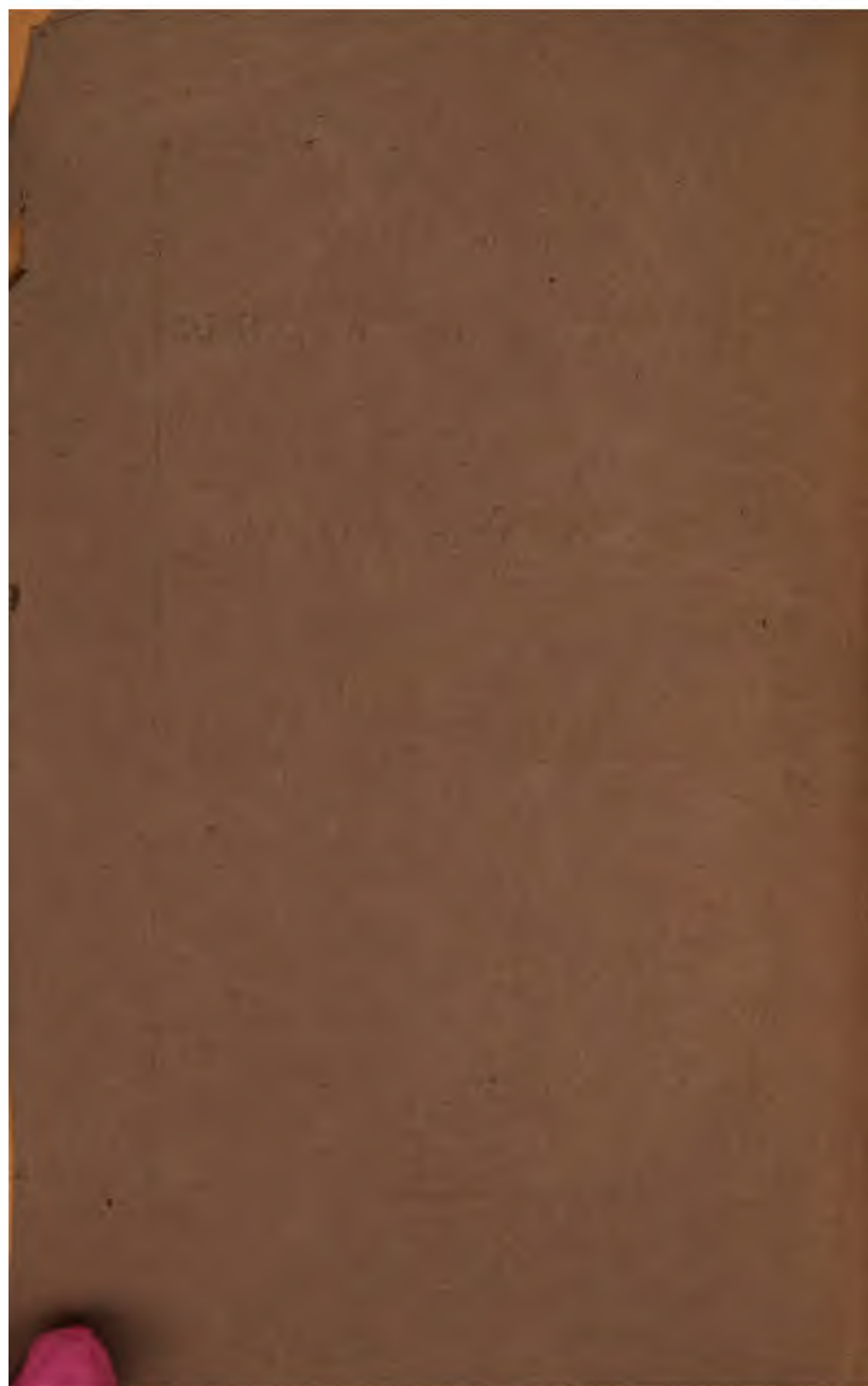
OF THE
REV. THOMAS BELSHAM.

EXTRACTED FROM
THE MONTHLY REPOSITORY FOR FEBRUARY, &c., 1830.

LONDON :

REPRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY THE UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION, 3,
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ON THE
CHARACTER AND WRITINGS
OF THE
REV. T. BELSHAM.*

WE are told that it was not the custom of the ancients to sacrifice to heroes till after sunset. But it *was* their custom to sacrifice to them then : and if we imitate their forbearance—if in the life-time of those whose mental heroism helps to clear the world of the monsters of ignorance, error, and superstition, we suffer our gratitude to accumulate in our hearts,

* A Sermon, on occasion of the Death of the Rev. Thomas Belsham, preached at the Chapel in Essex Street, Nov. 22, 1829. By the Rev. Thomas Madge. Hunter. 8vo.

Courage and Confidence in the Cause of Christian Truth : a Sermon, preached at the New Gravel-Pit Meeting-House, Hackney, on Sunday, November 29, in reference to the Death of the Rev. Thomas Belsham, who departed this Life November 11, 1829, in the Eightieth Year of his Age. Together with the Address at his Interment in Bunhill Fields, November 20. By Robert Aspland. Hunter, Eaton, and Teulon and Fox. 8vo.

A Humble Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. Thomas Belsham, who departed this Life on Tuesday, November 11, 1829, in the Eightieth Year of his Age. Hunter. 12mo.

The Accomplished Teacher of Religion : a Sermon, preached at the New Meeting-House, Birmingham, November 22, 1829, on occasion of the Death of the Rev. Thomas Belsham. By John Kentish. Birmingham : Belcher and Son, London : Hunter. 8vo.

year after year, unexpressed, at least in all its fullness and fervour—it well becomes us also, when the night has closed in upon our benefactors, and they sleep in the grave's darkness, to complete the imitation, and bring our offerings of respect and gratitude, a manly and a Christian homage, to the memory of those who were distinguished for piety, worth, and usefulness. It is due to them that their names should at length be coupled with that well-earned praise, which cannot now be considered as flattery, and which there is no longer the possibility of their shewing, by subsequent inconsistency, was prematurely and injudiciously bestowed. It is due to ourselves that we enrich our minds with the images of men whom we may safely venerate; who “being dead yet speak,” and that more impressively than could ever living voice; and the contemplation of whose lives and labours stimulates our aspirations after kindred excellence. And it is due to the world that we allow not those to be forgotten or unhonoured who have toiled for its improvement, notwithstanding its disregard or its hostility, and conferred benefits upon it which will only by a future generation be generally recognized and rightly appreciated.

This duty is peculiarly incumbent upon Unitarians, for reasons connected both with our internal condition, and our external relations. Our churches are the sanctuary of Religious Liberty; and the members of our societies enjoy and exercise a free-

dom of thought and speech not tolerated by other denominations. We "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," and encourage him to speak his mind; and only put Christ's yoke upon the neck of Christ's disciples. But this very freedom, in which may we stand fast, and abound yet more and more, for it is our Christian heritage and rich in blessings, diminishes the immediate recompense which, in other connexions, awaits him who ably and successfully serves the cause to which he is attached. We have no temporal honours or emoluments to bestow; and we are too jealous of our individual independence of thought and action to admit of that real though unavowed supremacy, that rank in a party, with which sectarianism rewards its champions, and which is by no means destitute of its accompanying earthly advantages. The most highly gifted amongst us are only recognized as fellow-labourers in the pursuit of Truth; they speak to those who will be sure to "judge what they say," often to controvert it, sometimes to censure it; and the danger rather is that they should not be sufficiently "esteemed for their works' sake," than that they should become the "lords over God's heritage," which "verily have their reward," in more thoroughly drilled sects, both established and non-established. "One is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren." But if this jealousy of our rights make us, like Republicans, somewhat niggardly towards the living, it demands of our hearts to render the more ample justice to

the dead ; the more especially as the relation in which we stand towards other Religionists is, in their estimation at least, one of unceasing hostility. Too many of them do not scruple to use unlawful weapons, the poisoned shafts of calumny, and there is a malignity from which even the grave does not shelter. The foul breath of Bigotry has vented many a posthumous slander. The object of such animosity rests not the less calmly, sleeping in Jesus ; and there might be copied for his monument the inscription on that of Chillingworth, "Nec sentit damna sepulchri ;" but it is the sacred duty of those who love Truth to protect the names of its departed advocates from insult, and to declare that "the memory of the just *shall be blessed*" by those who knew their worth, however virulently it may be aspersed, or however daringly it may be anathematized.

To render posthumous praise honourable to the individual on whom it is bestowed, and useful to society, it is needful that it be discriminative. Indefinite laudation is worthless at best, and may become pernicious. Seldom has there lived a man to whom such a mode of doing honour would be less appropriate than it would be in the present case. The most becoming tribute to the memory of the late Rev. THOMAS BELSHAM must be an accurate analysis of what he was and what he did. Many persons have much ampler qualifications for this task than he who is now attempting it ; but he has not been an inattentive reader of Mr. Belsham's

works, nor a careless observer of his course for many years ; and he has the advantage of what has been already done by the able authors of the publications whose titles are affixed to this article.

Of Mr. Belsham's personal history it is not our present purpose to speak. To do that as it should be done, and as we hope it will be done, would imply long habits of intimacy, and access to the memoranda, correspondence, and other documents, which happily remain, and which have been, by his direction, consigned to a friend and former pupil, who will, we doubt not, worthily discharge the very important trust thus confided to him. To give the world a faithful picture of the man will be his honourable and useful task. Ours is to endeavour to portray the Minister ; to exhibit and estimate him as a Theologian, a Philosopher, a Controversialist, and a Preacher of the Gospel.

The outline of Mr. Belsham's life, so far as it is needful now to refer to it, is soon sketched. His father was an intelligent and respectable Dissenting Minister. In 1766, being about seventeen years of age, he was admitted a student at Daventry, then under the superintendence of Dr. Ashworth and the Rev. Thomas Robins. He was appointed Assistant Tutor on the completion of his Academical course ; and after an interval of three years' absence, during which he was pastor of a congregation at Worcester, he succeeded Mr. Robins as Divinity Tutor, and minister of the Daventry congregation, in the year

1781. Leaving this situation, in 1789, in consequence of his opinions having become Unitarian, he retired into an obscurity in which, whatever his own humility might dictate, it was not possible he should long remain. He was promptly summoned from it to become one of the Tutors at the New College, Hackney, an office which was soon terminated by the dissolution of the Institution. In 1794, he was chosen to the vacant pulpit of Dr. Priestley, by the Gravel-Pit congregation; and eleven years after, he removed to Essex-Street Chapel, of which he continued minister till his death, although for the last five years the public services had chiefly devolved upon his coadjutor and successor, the Rev. Thomas Madge.

Brief as this record is, it contains one event of incalculable moment to the individual himself, and of no little interest to thousands besides, if consequences be considered; we mean his conversion to the Unitarian faith. The circumstances of that change merit serious consideration. So mighty a transformation of opinion presents a phenomenon well worthy the attention of all who make the human mind an object of scientific study. On that of the devout Christian it has far higher claims. It is the exhibition of a soul of no ordinary powers passing either from darkness into light, or from light into darkness; becoming emancipated from error or else apostatizing from the truth; and either advancing towards the full fruition of gospel salva-

tion, or sealing its own eternal and wretched doom. Happily we have the means of approaching to "see this great sight:" its particulars are recorded with sufficient amplitude to guide our conclusions, if not to satisfy all our curiosity. They are thus stated in the *Memoirs of Lindsey* (chap. x.); the account in the *Preface to the Calm Inquiry* is to the same effect:

"As a minister, whose principles were known to be what is commonly called evangelical, the author of this Memoir had been appointed, in the year 1781, Theological Tutor in the Academy at Daventry, which was a continuation of the academy under the late pious and celebrated Dr. Doddridge at Northampton, and was supported by the trustees of the late William Coward, Esq., who bequeathed a considerable estate for the education of Dissenting ministers, and for other religious purposes. The office of pastor of the Independent congregation at Daventry was at that time held in connexion with the office of Divinity Tutor, and to this he was also invited. The Unitarian controversy, revived with so much animation by the writings of Mr. Lindsey and Dr. Priestley, and brought home so closely to the feelings by the truly Christian and disinterested conduct of the former, in the resignation of his vicarage, was at that time in its zenith. And the tutor regarding it as a question of the highest importance, conceiving it to be his duty to state it fairly before the theological students, and observing that the question concerning the simple humanity of Christ, which was now become the great controversy of the age, was scarcely glanced at in Dr. Doddridge's Lectures, which were the text-book of the Institution, he determined to draw up a new course of Lectures upon the subject. And to this he was impelled by an additional motive, namely,

the hope of putting a speedy termination to this newly-revived controversy; since, whatever respect he entertained for the abilities, the learning, and the character of the great champions of the Unitarian faith, he felt a perfect confidence that their arguments would be found capable of an easy and satisfactory reply; and whatever might be the errors of his own education, he had been happily instructed and firmly fixed in the grand principle, that freedom of investigation must ultimately be favourable to truth. The method which he pursued in instituting this inquiry he has detailed at large in another place. It is, therefore, sufficient at present to mention, that he first selected all the texts of the New Testament upon which the controversy is allowed to depend; most certainly not omitting any which appeared to him favourable to the pre-existence and divinity of Jesus Christ. These he arranged under distinct heads; and under each text he introduced the explanations of the most approved commentators of the Trinitarian, Arian, Socinian, and Unitarian hypotheses, very rarely introducing any theological comments of his own, choosing rather to leave the remarks of the different expositors to make their own impression upon the minds of his pupils. The labour was considerable: but it was not thought burdensome either by the teacher or the learner; the consciousness of honest, unbiassed inquiry, and the gradual opening of light, was ample compensation for all. But the result was widely different from what had been expected. First, the pupils, whose ingenuous minds, not so firmly bound by prejudice, were more open to conviction, began to discard the errors of education: and some of them, much to the regret of their worthy friends, and not least to that of their tutor, became decided Unitarians. The tutor's habits of thinking were more firmly riveted; and though from the beginning of the inquiry he was a little surprised at discovering so few direct, and, as he thought, une-

quivocal assertions of his favourite doctrine, and though in the process of his labours he found himself obliged to abandon one text because it was spurious, another because it admitted of a different and more probable interpretation, and so on, and was thus driven by degrees out of his strong holds; yet such was the ascendancy which the associations of education had obtained over his mind, that he does not believe it would have been in the power of argument to have subdued it, had not the nature of his office, which made it necessary for him to repeat the lectures to successive classes, and which thereby compelled his attention again and again to the subject, eventually, and almost imperceptibly, overruled his original prepossessions, and brought him over to the faith to which he had certainly no previous partiality, to the profession of which he had no interest to induce him, and which he had fondly flattered himself that he should without much difficulty have overthrown. Those who have never changed their opinions, who are not much in the habits of inquiry, or who have not watched the vacillations of the mind when it is deliberating upon subjects of high importance, when it is anxious to form a correct judgment, when much depends upon the decision, and when it once begins to suspect as erroneous what it has long regarded as sacred and essential truth, may wonder that the teacher should be so long in making up his mind, and that he should not be able to mark the day and the hour of his conversion. The fact is, that he was not himself aware of it till upon the repetition of a sermon which he had preached a few years before, and in which the pre-existence of Christ and its concomitant doctrines were assumed as facts, he found himself so embarrassed from beginning to end, by his sceptical doubts, that he determined from that time to desist from teaching what he now first discovered that he no longer believed. This was in the autumn of 1788. And conceiving that, his

mind being now made up upon the subject, it was his duty no longer to hold his peace, but to bear his public testimony to the truth ; and, at the same time, being conscious that he no longer possessed the qualifications which were deemed essential to the offices he sustained, and regarding it as both unhandsome and unjust to put his friends under the disagreeable necessity of dismissing him from his office, which they probably would have thought it their duty to do ; at least, being fully persuaded that it was right to give them their option in the case, he determined to resign both the Academy and the congregation. His resignation of the former he sent in to the trustees in January, 1789, requesting them to keep it concealed till March, as it would be impossible for him to quit his situation till midsummer ; and he had no desire to make himself the topic of conversation till it became absolutely necessary."—Pp. 285—291.

Whether Mr. Belsham was right in his views of the teachings of scripture upon the person of Christ, before or after this great change, it is for every individual to decide for himself by a direct appeal to scripture. There he will find "the Judge that ends the strife." But there are several points in the narrative to which it is desirable that attention should be directed, especially the previous character of the individual, the manner in which his inquiries were conducted, the effect of his convictions upon his situation and prospects, and his subsequent conduct and feelings.

Mr. Belsham's conversion took place in the full maturity of his mind and character. He was between thirty and forty years of age when he commenced the investigation, in which he continued to

be engaged during the lapse of seven or eight years. For his mental abilities and attainments, his moral habits, and his personal piety, we have what is perhaps the best evidence which, after so long a time has elapsed, can possibly be appealed to, in the satisfactory results of the investigations which it must be presumed were instituted on occasion of the several appointments which had been conferred upon him. He had been subjected to four ordeals of this description. The verdict of the Trustees of the seminary at Daventry, in his original selection for the Assistant Tutorship about 1770, and when he was invited to fill the Divinity Chair in 1781, and that of the congregations at Worcester and Daventry, cannot lightly be set aside now. He had evidently earned, and retained, a feeling of deep respect, as an accomplished and faithful Christian minister, in the opinions of those who had every opportunity, and every inducement, to observe him closely and judge him strictly. He was not a man to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. His was no unformed, uninformed, and unexercised mind. Could we imagine for a moment the formal carrying on of inquiry by delegation, and the ascertaining of religious truth by substitute, he was a man to whom unlearned Christians might have come with confidence, saying, Examine and decide this controversy for us. If not that of such a man, let us be told whose conversion is of importance, and ought to impress the honest and humble mind with the duty of full--

partially examining the subject in dispute. It will be difficult to mention any quality required in such an one, a possessor of which cannot be indicated in the illustrious list of converts to which he belongs, enriched as it is with the names of Watts, Lindsey, R. Robinson, and many others ; and it will be difficult among them to point out one whose character should give more weight to his conversion.

The mode in which the investigation was conducted corresponded with the nature and importance of the subject. He first collected the whole of the evidence from the New Testament. This operation was, in itself, favourable to a right conclusion. In thus going over the New Testament, an unbiassed mind would not only possess itself of the separate passages supposed to bear upon the argument, but would receive that impression which the general aspect of the sacred volume is calculated to produce. It would thus be prepared to judge better of the letter of particular texts by the spirit of the whole. It is probable that, though he might not himself perceive it, Mr. Belsham's former opinions received a considerable shock from this first operation. His next step was to arrange that evidence, thus collected, under distinct heads ; a process rendered necessary by the nature of the subject, and which he accomplished in a manner eminently impartial and lucid. The question of the supreme deity of Christ was, by this means, disentangled from that of his pre-existence ; and each scheme of pre-existence

was also presented in connexion with the real or apparent amount of scriptural evidence in its behalf. It might seem that it only remained now to draw the conclusive inference from the whole, in reliance on the Divine blessing for its correctness. But that blessing is best sought in the use of all the aid which Providence puts within our reach ; and it was well to complete what had been done by allowing a hearing to the different systems in the persons of their most esteemed commentators, whose explanations are therefore appended, in juxta-position with each other, and with the text which they so differently expound. The whole was then subjected to repeated consideration and revision. What more *could* the disciple do to ascertain his Master's doctrine? Who has ever better prepared himself to offer the prayer of faith,

“ Be gracious, heaven ! for now laborious man
Hath done his part” ?

And is it not more in the spirit of the gospel to believe that heaven *was* gracious, than to imagine that all this honest toil ended in being abandoned to “ strong delusion that he might believe a lie” to his soul's destruction ?

The effect upon Mr. Belsham's situation and prospects was certainly not such as could give him any bias towards the conclusions at which he finally arrived. A man may be in a situation much less comfortable and honourable than that which Mr.

Belsham occupied at Daventry, and yet feel it a very severe sacrifice to relinquish it, at the age of forty, and begin life afresh, with perhaps new occupations to engage in, new friends to seek, and new connexions to form. Nor is this the strongest form of the temptation to equivocate with his own mind and conscience. It is a fearful thing to meet the altered countenances of religious associates, persons loved and respected, and whose love and respect *had been* mutual. The moral principle itself will often seem to plead against its own dictates, and hold out the prospect of continued and extensive usefulness as a bribe for a silent compromise with error. A time, too, is required for opinions to work themselves into feelings, for the newly embraced doctrines to generate their own devotional and practical atmosphere. The heart will linger in its accustomed haunts, amid its long-cherished associations, long after the voice of the judgment has commanded to "arise and go hence." Not lightly does the writer express his conviction that instances are far from being rare, in the secret annals of orthodoxy, in which the spirit has fainted under the commencement of these fiery trials, and shrunk back from enduring their continuance into a state, our pity for which cannot be greater than our disapproval of the system which creates the temptation. How Mr. Belsham felt and met this crisis will be best shewn by the following letters, which were written at the time, and ad-

dressed to his friend, the Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, by one of the members of whose family we have been favoured with copies of them :

“ But I hasten to mention, that as you have been very explicit in the declaration of your sentiments to me, and I have been equally frank in the remarks I have made upon them, I think that you have a right to be acquainted with my sentiments, and I hope that you, in return, will be equally free, and *amicably severe*, if you please, in your remarks upon them, and in your advice to me with respect to them. You have hinted more than once that you thought my principles very nearly coincided with those of Dr. Priestley. I could mention a variety of particulars in which I very widely differ from the Doctor, and with regard to which I could, if I thought it either honourable or honest, raise my character for orthodoxy, by joining with open mouth in the general cry against him.

“ But to speak the truth, I do very plainly see that the principles which I have now adopted, and that after what appears to me to be the most close, patient, and impartial study of the subject, and which I have received with the greatest reluctance, and very much against my expectation and my will, are strictly and properly *Unitarian* ; and I feel myself so fixed in these sentiments, that I begin almost to wonder that I could ever be an *Arian*. I do not mean nor wish to enter into any argument with you upon this subject. I hope that you will never see, what I think that I clearly see, viz. that your sentiments very nearly correspond with my own, except in the trifling circumstance of the pre-existence of the human soul of Christ. I do not wish you to be involved in the embarrassment in which I now find myself ; but I wish for your advice and opinion how I ought to act.

“ What step do you think it right for me, in my peculiar circumstances, to take ? Ought I to go on with

the Academy and the Congregation without taking any notice of the material change that has taken place in my sentiments, till it is discovered by others, and intimations are given that it is proper that I should withdraw ; or ought I at once to acquaint the Trustees and the Congregation with the change of my principles, and leave it to them to determine whether they choose to retain as their minister and tutor a person whose sentiments are so very materially altered from what they were at his appointment to office seven years ago ?

“ This is a nice and difficult question, and much of the peace of my future life depends upon the decision of it : I beg the favour of you to give me your opinion frankly and faithfully, and I must confide in your friendship not to divulge, for the present at least, the discovery which I have made to you, and which I believe is not suspected by any individual in the congregation, not even by the perspicacious Mr. Robins.

“ Notwithstanding the difficulty into which I have brought myself, I am not sorry for the pains that I have taken in the investigation of the subject. I can appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that if I err, it is not a voluntary error : I have taken all the pains I could to gain information ; I have with great reluctance admitted it into my mind ; I have earnestly implored illumination from above ; I have done all that I can do ; and I have now made up my mind, and am willing to abide the consequence.

“ I do not know whether I may ever hope to appear in your pulpit again, but I hope you will not banish me from your fire-side. I look upon you as well as myself to be an inquirer after truth ; and if you are not perfectly enlightened, you at least *see men as trees walking*, and your inquisitive mind will not stop till it has found rest in the principles of *true Unitarianism* and *genuine Christianity*.

“ Yours very sincerely and affectionately,

“ *Daventry, Feb. 20, 1789.*”

“ T. BELSHAM.

" Shall I hide from my friend the thing that I do? I asked his advice, and he has been so very ready and so very frank in giving it, and his sentiments so nearly concur with my own, that I think he will have some reason to complain that I have not treated him with honour, if I do not let him know exactly how matters stand.

" I had no doubt in my own mind as to the steps proper to be taken at the time that I wrote to ask your opinion. I had actually taken the most decisive measures, but I wished by sounding you to have your free, unbiassed opinion upon a question which you apprehended to be still in suspense.

" My mind has been gradually advancing to Unitarian principles (N. B. I allow you to be a Unitarian as well as myself) for some time past. My difficulties upon that subject have been gradually lessening; and since I have been reading the lectures this session, my mind has been more and more confirmed in these views; and the revolution which has taken place in my sentiments has been attended with so much reluctance and so many struggles, generally so contrary to my expectations, almost to my inclinations, that I think it impossible that I should ever see the doctrine in a different light from what I now do. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*, from the lion's den of Unitarianism.

" I now consider myself as being, upon the one hand, totally different from what I was when Mr. Coward's Trustees chose me to the Academy; and, upon the other, as disqualified from supplying the generality of Dissenting congregations who ought to be supplied from Mr. Coward's Academy with suitable ministers. I had no doubt, therefore, that honour and duty required that I should quit my present situation, and I determined to resign. This resolution I formed about October last. I did not mention a word of it to any person in the world till the latter end of January, when I sent my letter of resignation to Mr.

Coward's Trustees, at the same time assigning my reasons. The next week I received a very handsome letter from Mr. Paice, in which he acquainted me, *that my resignation was accepted.*

"Of this event there are no persons in the kingdom who have any knowledge at present, but Mr. C.'s Trustees, Mr. W. Smith, Mr. Pett, and yourself.

"It is remarkable that the affairs both of the Congregation and the Academy are at this time peculiarly promising. Two or three new families of Dissenters are come to live in the town,—the Sunday-school is thriving,—the young people have formed themselves into a society, and a considerable number of them are coming to the Lord's table, and I do not know that we have any complaint or uneasiness.—The members of my family are universally orderly, diligent, and well-behaved; and though a considerable number are to leave the house this vacation, I have already the prospect of twelve or fourteen new students, which is a greater number than I have known of, at this time of the year, since I kept the Academy.

"It is a little mortifying to give up every thing at a time when prospects are so very promising. It is still more mortifying to find, that the very pains I have taken to qualify myself for the station I am in, have operated directly contrary to my intention and expectations. Had I contented myself with going over the old lectures in a slovenly way, I might have been Tutor at Daventry as long as I lived. I am sure I never could have changed my principles had I taken less pains in the business than I actually have,—and because I have thought it my duty to take pains in acquiring thorough information upon the subjects treated of in the lectures, behold, I am all at once incapacitated for the office I sustain, and am doomed, together with my lucubrations, to retire to silence, solitude, and oblivion. After all, I don't repent of what I have

done.—I am in the hand of a wise and good Providence.—If I am to be honoured as an instrument of further service, some door of usefulness will be opened before me ; and though it is painful to be laid aside in the midst of life, yet if such is the will of my heavenly Father, I would bow to his disposal with an unrepining heart, and say, ‘Thy will be done.’”

“ Believe me, my dear Friend,

“ Yours very sincerely and affectionately,

“ T. BELSHAM.

“ *Daventry, March 3, 1789.*”

The lingerings of human feeling, the decision of a sincere lover of truth, and the humble resignation to the Divine Will of a genuine servant of Christ, are beautifully exemplified in these letters.

If we look to the fruits of this conversion to Unitarianism, none of those deadly symptoms are to be perceived which should have followed an apostacy from saving truth to fatal error. Unitarianism is said to tend to Infidelity ; and Mr. Belsham’s mind was not one to stop short of the legitimate consequences of any tenet which he held, however obnoxious those consequences might be. What are the traces of this tendency during the forty years of his life which followed, and which were dedicated to the service of Christianity with an undiminished sense of its worth, reliance on its promises, and zeal for its promotion ? His latest and his constant feeling on this subject appears in the last paragraph of his last published work. He is discoursing on the Cessation of Miraculous Powers after the Age of the Apostles, and concludes thus :

"There is in the divine religion of Jesus, as it is exhibited in the records of the New Testament, a simplicity, an energy, a majesty, which at once irradiates the understanding and convinces the judgment, which captivates and rules the heart. It disdains the disgraceful support of fictitious miracles and pious frauds. It asks not the continuance even of those real and splendid displays of divine power which were necessary to its first introduction. Christianity stands alone. Under the protection of Divine Providence, it has borne the shock of more than seventeen centuries. And it is now more deeply rooted than ever. It shall endure and flourish till the end of time ; and revolving centuries shall but add to its beauty and its glory, till in the end its branches shall extend over the whole earth, and all the nations shall be gathered under its shadow. Hasten, O Lord, this glorious period. May thy kingdom come !" —Sermons, Vol. II. p. 495.

This is not the language of a mind which was disaffected towards Divine Revelation, and it well corresponds with the tenor of his feelings and conduct. No deficiency of zeal for what he deemed sacred truth will be alleged against him ; and yet his piety was unimpaired by his habits of controversy. The deep reverence of his devotion was exceedingly impressive ; yet it was not further removed from the offensive familiarity in prayer which some assume, than from the slavish terror of superstitious worship. Of his faithfulness as a Christian pastor we shall have to speak presently. Of his deportment in social life, how many of us there are who can attest the accuracy of the picture which 'A Sincere Mourner' has drawn !

"Nothing could exceed the amenity of Mr. Belsham's

manners in social life. With talents and attainments that rendered him so much an object of interest, he was entirely free from the vanity of displaying his powers, and of engrossing attention to himself. In the friendly circle he was at once dignified, courteous, and cheerful, and all spontaneously paid him their tribute of admiration and respect. When the conversation touched on topics of literature, metaphysics, morals, or the evidences and doctrines of religion, his remarks were sure to be instructive. There was a peculiar distinctness as well as pertinency of thought in what he said. It made a deep impression, and always tended to improvement.

"To the children of sorrow he was a most humane, sympathizing, and considerate benefactor, ever ready to lighten their burthens and dry their tears. He would look into their wants, and would speak of them to others. The cause of learning and religion had his heart and his prayers. His pecuniary contributions in its support were nobly generous, unmeasured in many cases even by his ability.

"For some years his health had been gradually declining. His disease often assumed an alarming character: but he knew the goodness of the ever-present Helper in whom he trusted, and he was not afraid. He perceived that 'the shadows of the evening were stretched out;' but his faith in the precious promises of the gospel was steadfast, and it filled him with serenity and peace—a serenity and a peace which earth has no power to give or take away. His warfare is now accomplished—his toils and his trials are past, and he is gone!—gone to his bright reward in a far happier and holier state, where there will be no more death, and where we shall praise our God not merely for his mercies which have gladdened us, but also for the troubles which have brought us low."—Pp. 18—20.

Whatever, then, may be said of the faith from

which Mr. Belsham departed, that which he adopted and adhered to, enabled him to live and die as became a Christian. His conduct adorned the gospel, and his heart felt its consolations. Let bigotry "lay her hand on her mouth, and her mouth in the dust," and confess the presence of the Christian Spirit, though she may not yet acknowledge that of the Christian Doctrine.*

* The Congregational Magazine for January, has presented its readers with an Obituary of Mr. Belsham, in which, amongst sundry errors and misstatements, is the following very insidious paragraph :

"Two days of perfect consciousness preceded his dissolution, but it is reported that an ominous silence was maintained upon the opinions of the past, and the prospects of the future. If this be true, it will become the surviving champions of Unitarianism to explain the melancholy fact."

The insinuation is as untrue as the mode of putting it forth is unmanly. For several days before his death, Mr. Belsham had lost the power of distinct articulation ; but even in that state, he found means to express, in a way which could not be mistaken, the composure of his mind. During some days previous, he suffered severely, and it was evident that the hand of death was on him ; but then, and so long as the power of speech was allowed him, there was no silence "upon the opinions of the past," or "the prospects of the future," but such allusions to both, indicating principles unshaken and hopes undimmed, intermingled with acts of devotion, as became the humble and faithful minister of Christ when about to render up his account to his Lord.

The writer has screened himself from the charge of inventing this report ; he is, or at least he appears as being, only its propagator. The difference is not material. The existence of a propensity to falsify the death-bed behaviour of Unitarians has not now been manifested for the first time. "It will become the surviving champions of *Trinitarianism* to explain the melancholy fact."

The Obituary concludes with the following admonition to Unitarians :

"The present state of the Unitarian body in this country must be to the friends of Evangelical religion most satisfactory, while the

In the services which Mr. Belsham subsequently rendered to Unitarian Christianity, his numerous publications first present themselves to notice; and amongst these, the first place is due to that important work of which he is known to have been the

general failure of its efforts at home and abroad, may well call its surviving members and advocates to pause, and solemnly re-examine the question, 'lest haply they be found fighting against God.'"

The writer of this admonition must labour under considerable mistake both as to the character of the persons to whom he addresses it, and as to the assumed facts on which it is founded. What with the allurements of the Establishment on the one hand, and the bigotry of the Orthodox Dissenters on the other, the ranks of Unitarianism are kept tolerably well purged of all who can be drawn or driven from their principles; of all who require the concurrence of a multitude to satisfy them that they are in the right path; and who doubt the dictates of the "still small voice" of truth, unless it find an immediate response in the clamours of popular applause. They have counted the cost of being in a minority.

It is not impossible that the last Report of the Unitarian Association, and some recent articles occasioned by it in this publication, may have led the Congregationalist into the other mistake with which he is so well satisfied. Accustomed as he is to the way in which religious societies deal with the public in their reports, this is not surprising. Fresh from such documents as they send forth, we can excuse his mistaking the frank exposure of occasional and temporary failures and discouragements, and the fervent rebuke of indifference, for an intimation of that total discomfiture whose approach it might indicate in other connexions. We can excuse, too, his forgetting every symptom of progressiveness, however solid and decisive, which, from the very nature of the case, would not be forced on his notice, or perhaps adverted to at all in the productions referred to. Our "failure" abroad will bear a very advantageous comparison with the success of evangelical missions in the same region; and at home it must be a most unthankful view of the dealings of Providence which could make us suspect that we were "fighting against God." All that we require, and what by the blessing of heaven we hope to excite, is, more activity to reap the fields that are already ripe, or that are fast ripening, unto the harvest.

responsible Editor, *The Improved Version of the New Testament*.

The utility of this performance has been sometimes underrated, from searching for it in a wrong direction. No such attempt can, or ought to supersede the use of the Common Version in the pulpit and the closet. The phraseology with which our earliest devout associations are entwined, and which therefore must needs be the most powerful in exciting pious feeling, should never be relinquished but when its abandonment is required by truth and conscience. The language of the Common Version is the mother tongue of Devotion. It well deserves to be so; and not the less on account of some few antiquated forms of speech, such as a modern translator would study to introduce when he was rendering an ancient original. But although for these purposes the Common should not be superseded by the Improved Version, there is great advantage to be derived from their conjoint use in attaining a knowledge of the Scriptures. It is almost too obvious to remark, that no two translators, however learned and faithful, would render a passage of any length into English by the very same words. The sense may be substantially the same, but there will be shades of difference in the expressions; and that sense will be the more perfectly comprehended by the mere English reader from his comparison of the versions. Familiarity with the sound of words often imposes itself upon the mind for a perception

of their meaning. This is particularly liable to occur, and does in fact very extensively occur, to devout readers of the New Testament. It is one evil, amongst many benefits, resulting from early acquaintance with, and deep veneration for, the language of scripture. The best remedy is the perusal of a version of which the phraseology is as dissimilar as is consistent with strict fidelity. Campbell's translation of the Gospels, Wakefield's and Newcome's of the whole New Testament, were well adapted for this purpose. The Improved Version, formed on the basis of the latter, gave it an extent of circulation which it never before possessed ; and the very diversity of style which disqualified it for use, as to devotional purposes, rendered its aid efficient for detecting that self-deception which had mistaken a recollection of the words for a knowledge of the sense of scripture. Then the Improved Version gave the public the original text, as far as it has been recovered by the most diligent and successful criticism. The produce of the labours of the learned was made common property. God's word was cleansed from man's additions. Christians have a right to its possession so purified ; but by whom else has that right been practically recognized ? What have the wise and the powerful of other denominations done for the unlearned in this particular ? They have left the community to this day without the Word of God in its pure and undefiled state.

Public authority only sanctions, Churches only use, Bible Societies only circulate, and Missionaries only translate from, an interpolated text ; and one which they all know and allow to be interpolated. How good and pious men answer for this to their own consciences it concerns not us to inquire. But it does concern us that they who have the honesty and the courage to separate the chaff from the wheat, and to put into the hands of the people the words written by the apostles without the forgeries which have been added, should be remembered with honour and with blessing. And further, the Improved Version not only gave the mere English reader the results of the Critic's researches, and the Translator's labours, but furnished him with a rich collection of materials for the formation of his own judgment upon disputed matters. The Introduction and Notes are a noble monument of the learning, industry, and zeal of the Editor. He has laid bare the arcana of biblical criticism to vulgar gaze ; brought it down, as Socrates did philosophy, from the clouds to the abodes of common life ; and on many a point which it used to be the privilege of the learned to discuss, made the right of private judgment no longer a dead letter to the many, but one which they may safely and profitably exercise. Defects and errors in this great work there undoubtedly are ; but it contains also, to a considerable extent, materials for their correction ; and no student of the New

Testament, learned or unlearned, can fail, but through his own fault, of finding its assistance highly valuable.

The earliest of Mr. Belsham's publications, with the exception of single sermons, was the "Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, entitled 'A Practical View of the prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians,' " &c., 1798. This work remains the most complete statement of Unitarian Christianity which we have from his pen. What he considered the doctrines and the spirit of the gospel are exhibited in contrast with those of the popular system as portrayed by the respectable, eloquent, and devout author of the "Practical View." Faith is opposed to faith, spirit to spirit, tendency to tendency. The Divine character is vindicated from the imputation of vindictiveness, human nature from that of total depravity, and Christian morality from that of useless austerity. There is little, and the occasion did not require it, of minute and elaborate discussion. The writer's object was a general view of the two Creeds in contrast; and that object is accomplished in a complete, perspicuous, and impressive manner. "Look on this picture, and on that." A rapid glance is cast over the whole circle of theological topics. It is the glance of one who knows the region well; who is familiar with all its heights and depths; and who has thoroughly mastered in detail the several particulars which are here presented in combination as a whole. There is

great power in this work, more, we think, than in any other of Mr. Belsham's productions, though he was always any thing but feeble. The subject itself was elevating; the great principles and general views of Christian truth are ever pre-eminently so; and he felt the inspiring dignity of his theme.

His next important work was not theological, though its connexion with and bearing upon theology are sufficiently evident. In 1801, he published the "Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind and of Moral Philosophy."

Although this book cannot be recommended now, in preference to many others, as a manual of mental philosophy, there are portions of it whose worth is unrivalled. Chapters ix., xi. and xii. may be particularly specified, on the Will, on Immateriality and Materialism, and on the Natural Evidence of a Future Life. They are most admirable summaries of the arguments advanced on both sides of the questions to which they refer. The Author manifests his own opinions, and they were decided ones; but Mr. Belsham was remarkable for never diminishing by his statement, but very often increasing the force of objections against his own opinions. It was an honourable peculiarity. It evinced the sincerity with which he declared that "to him, truth was victory." The merit of these summary statements has triumphed over sectarian antipathies, and been recognized by men whose enlightened minds and hostile creeds conferred a double value on their

praise. Wherever the truth may be on these much contested points, it will be long before the evidence will be any where found more concisely and yet luminously exhibited than in this volume.

Mr. Belsham was, as is well known, a follower of Hartley ; and resolved all mental phænomena into the association of ideas. His theory of morals is such as most naturally, and as he thought necessarily, follows from that doctrine. He defines virtue to be " the tendency of an action, affection, habit, or character, to the ultimate happiness of the agent." He contends that, " under the government of perfect wisdom and benevolence," the ultimate happiness of the individual must needs coincide with " the greatest general good ;" and concludes that " self-love and benevolence can only be reconciled by religion." There are but eighty octavo pages of this treatise ; and as much real knowledge of the subject may be gained by their study as by that of the same number of volumes. Every moral system of celebrity is noticed and characterized. The fallacies on which many of them are founded are exposed by a few sentences in which the combination of brevity, simplicity, and conclusiveness, is very striking. This part of the volume should be kept in print and in circulation. A clear notion of the principle of morality is of more importance to its steady and consistent practice than many are apt to suppose. Without it there will occur, even in common life, cases of conscience in which we shall often be sadly

afloat, and sometimes go sadly astray. Nor are we safe in our interpretations of the preceptive passages of scripture without this guidance. How else can the local and temporary be distinguished with any degree of certainty from the permanent and universal? The test indeed is sanctioned, nay, it is furnished by scripture itself. The New Testament does not contain a code of laws, prescribing particular actions, with penalties annexed; but moral principles, which are, to a considerable extent, left to be applied by ourselves to the peculiar circumstances in which our lot may be cast. It always supposes, and sometimes expresses, a general notion of goodness, a definition of virtue, which coincides, as seems to us, with that laid down by our Author in this brief but valuable and useful treatise.

The remarks on Mr. Belsham's change of opinion having already conveyed our estimate to the reader of his *Calm Inquiry*, we pass on to his *Memoirs of Theophilus Lindsey*.

It is interesting to observe the strong affection and deep veneration with which Mr. Belsham ever regarded his excellent predecessor. They indicate his heartfelt appreciation of moral worth; for in ability and attainment it can scarcely be imagined that he was wholly unconscious of a superiority which must be sufficiently evident to any one who has compared their productions. Mr. Belsham's mind was of a much more sinewy and gigantic frame. It was to *the Unitarian Confessor* that his

homage was paid, and the emotion was deep and enduring in proportion to the rare merit of its object. Through the more than twenty years that he survived, their past intercourse seemed ever present to his memory and their future reunion to his hope. What Mr. Lindsey would have thought and felt would occur strongly to his mind at a very recent period, and in matters of comparatively trifling interest. The source of this feeling was, that he believed his character "to have been as free from blemish, and to have approached as near to perfection, as human frailty would admit, or as that of any individual since the apostolic age." There is something very touching and impressive in the following passage towards the conclusion of his sermon, delivered on occasion of Mr. Lindsey's death, which occurred on the 11th of November, 1807.

"Beloved, venerable friend, farewell. To have been admitted as an associate in labour and in friendship with thee, and with thy most worthy and revered coadjutor Dr. Priestley, has been the chief privilege of my life. To have paid this last tribute of affection and homage to thy memory and thy virtues has been the most honourable office in which I could engage. And to be united again to the same society, and in the same employments in a better and happier state, is the sublimest felicity to which I aspire."

In becoming the biographer of his friend and predecessor, it naturally devolved on Mr. Belsham to delineate the then state of Unitarianism, and its previous history, at least in its relations to the

Church of England, and so far as this had not been done in the "Historical View." Mr. Lindsey's name is identified with that portion of our annals, and the record is worthy of his memory. In like manner should Mr. Belsham's life be the continued history of our cause, from that time to the present, nor can there be any lack of materials to render it as full of instruction and of encouragement.

The chapter which relates to American Unitarianism was reprinted in that country, and occasioned a very animated controversy. Its statements were not affected, as to their general correctness; and considerable good resulted in the more bold and active assertion of their peculiar opinions to which our Transatlantic brethren were thereby led.

But the great worth of the work is in its moral tone and tendency. That single-hearted servant of Christ has left an ever-memorable example of the purest integrity. It was enough for him to hear the voice of the master; he was prepared to go whithersoever it might call him. His humble piety, his earnest inquiries after the path of duty, his prompt determination and no less prompt action, his unfailing trust in Providence, his rejection of all compromise between the world and conscience, and his meek and holy resignation, form a picture which it was a privilege for his biographer to portray, and is a privilege for us to possess. We rise from the perusal with the emotions which are due

to a moral benefactor. When the world shall have become worthy of such men, if the causes, under heaven's blessing, of so mighty a change can be distinctly traced, their histories, recorded by kindred minds, will probably be found to have been amongst the most efficient agencies of the felicitous transformation.

The Translation and Exposition of Paul's Epistles, the produce of labour continued, at intervals, for thirty years, is a work which must ultimately find its place, and that a prominent one, on the shelves of every good theological library.

For the production of a commentary of high merit and permanent worth, Mr. Belsham was eminently qualified. If he did not bring to the task that profound and extensive acquaintance with classical literature which some have possessed, he was intimately and critically conversant with the Greek of the New Testament and the Septuagint, which is a much more important requisite; his attainments as a scholar were of no mean or limited description; and he well knew how to avail himself of whatever could enrich his work in the researches of the most eminent philologists. His translation is avowedly rather "Eclectic" than original, and the remark may also be applied to his exposition. He did not affect novelty in the one, or eloquence in the other. His object was to elucidate the meaning of his author, and he has succeeded to a far greater extent than any commentator who preceded

him. From whatever quarter it might come, he welcomed any version, any paraphrase, any criticism, by which any of the "things hard to be understood" in the Apostle's writings could be rendered more intelligible. By accumulation, comparison, and selection, he constructed from the materials furnished by others the most complete work of the kind which has yet been produced. By the constant exercise of a sound judgment; by steady adherence to the principles of interpretation which he had laid down for his own guidance; and by ever keeping in view the design of the writer in each of his epistles, and the drift and bearing of his argument, as previously ascertained by those masterly analyses which are exhibited in the work itself, he gave a harmony and unity to the whole, as unbroken as if it had been the entire original production of a single mind. Some few discrepancies which there are in it, are evidently occasioned by the variations which must take place in the mind during so long a period, rather than by the plan which he pursued. It would be difficult to point out any work, with which this can fairly be compared, in which they are not much more abundant.

There can be little doubt that in process of time this great contribution to biblical criticism will render important service to the cause of Unitarian Christianity. The latent proofs with which the Epistles abound, that Paul's apostleship was of Christ, and that Christ's mission was of God, are

wrought out and set in the clearest light and most convincing form. Evidence, most forcible and impressive, of the reality of the gospel revelation, is elicited where the careless reader would not have suspected its existence; and in passages often, which, if they had not repelled by their seeming obscurity, would have been deemed fruitful only in objections and difficulties. Nor is the effect of the light thus collected and thrown upon the pages of this portion of Scripture less fatal to the speculations of the Trinitarian than to the objections of the Unbeliever. The modes of expression which have so long been associated with his peculiar tenets are traced to their sources, watched in their application, and shewn to afford him not even the shadow of support. The marked Unitarian character of the historical books of the New Testament had long ago forced itself into notice; and the various shifts and evasions resorted to by the advocates of the opposite doctrine had distinctly shewn that in the Gospels and the Acts they felt themselves upon hostile ground. Retreating from the light of our Lord's preaching and that of his apostles, they sought shelter in the obscurity and intricacies of epistles, those of Paul especially, which, from the very species of composition to which they belong, the circumstances in which they originated, the allusions with which they abound, and the peculiar character of the writer, must needs afford them an ample covert; and one from which it would not be

easy to dislodge them. It was fitting that the mysteries of modern orthodoxy should pretend to derive their brightest proof from those productions which were comparatively dark to contemporaries, and even to a brother apostle. The eye which cannot, or will not, behold objects in the sunshine, may well rejoice when clouds interpose or mists arise, and hail their gloom as the best medium for distinct vision. But it was also fitting that this resource should be cut off; that as far as is possible in this distant age, the obscurities of these epistles should be dispelled, and their difficulties explained; that the gospels and the epistles should be harmonized, not by the mystification of the former, but by the exposition of the latter; that the consistency should be evinced between the general principles which Paul has distinctly and solemnly affirmed, and the phraseology which in argument he has occasionally employed; that his meaning should be traced throughout his writings, and shewn never to require, though it may sometimes be capable of, a Trinitarian interpretation. This great and good work Mr. Belsham has accomplished. He has put Unitarianism in possession of the only part of Scripture, with the exception of here and there a detached passage, which could be considered as debateable ground. In his translation words may be exchanged for other words more apt and expressive; in his commentary phrases more perspicuous and explanatory may be substituted for his phrases; here

an useful addition may be made, and there his work may be improved by an omission ; but what thus remains to be done is trivial compared with what is done, and done for ever. The proof is before the world, and in time the world will heed it, that Unitarianism makes no partial appeal to Scripture, but is the doctrine of the Old Testament and of the New ; of Moses and of Christ ; of the Evangelists and of the Apostles ; of Peter and of Paul ; of the historical and of the argumentative books ; of the earliest and of the latest ; of the sermons which were preached, and of the epistles which were written ; of the plainest and simplest passages, and of those which are most fraught with difficulty and most liable to perversion. A reproach is wiped away from our opinions which, although it was never deserved, had never before received so ample a confutation.

In estimating Mr. Belsham's services to the cause of Unitarian Christianity, our attention is next claimed by numerous productions of humbler pretension, smaller size, and more temporary interest, than those already adverted to: Pamphlets, Sermons on particular occasions, &c., &c.

Whenever Unitarianism or Unitarians were assailed by calumny, Mr. Belsham was ready to stand forth for their defence ; and if, in the discharge of this duty, it proved needful or expedient for him to become in turn the assailant, he was always found to be a vigorous and formidable one. His pamphlet

style was excellent. There was no *prosiness* about him ; no flat, cumbrous, involved, interminable sentences. No controversy is more readable ; more full of stimulus and vitality. It is not declamatory ; it is not humorous ; but there is a wholesome, manly vigour in it which keeps the reader awake and alive. We doubt whether any of his antagonists did not heartily wish to be well rid of him.

With most of the excellences of an accomplished controversialist, let it be conceded that he had his share of the failing which has so commonly clung to that character. Plain truths, repeatedly demonstrated, yet pertinaciously cavilled at, he did sometimes re-assert with somewhat of a supercilious and dogmatical air, and an impatient tone. He did sometimes tie to his chariot-wheels the foe whom he had vanquished, but who would not confess his discomfiture. The unworthy and base behaviour of certain theologians did sometimes tempt him to the boundaries of "due Christian animosity" of language, though not of feeling. And there were, perhaps, some few occasions in which he was offensive without the palliations which such provocations afford. That this should have been the case we regret ; but we do not wonder. Who of the living that has had much to do with controversy shall cast the first stone ? Who of the mighty dead that struggled valiantly for the truth has come out of the conflict more stainless ? Every virtue of humanity has a failing for its shadow. The mild

and gentle generally make but poor reformers ; and those who are incapable of being betrayed or provoked into controversial asperities would be but too likely to leave error and misrepresentation in quiet possession of the field. The defects of a prompt, active, fervid spirit, must be taken together with its worth and usefulness ; both or neither, is, in the present state of humanity, too often the condition on which what we most need and admire on the one hand, and what we most deprecate on the other, are proffered to us. And who would be without these memorials of Mr. Belsham's zeal for the faith once delivered to the saints, even though he did sometimes rebuke too sharply ; or have lacked the aid of his trusty sword, because, like the Virginian troopers, he struck more heavily and cut more deeply than was necessary in order to disable the enemy ? Still, a failing it was ; a natural, a common one ; a failing which the greatest men have participated, and which is associated with qualities by whose worth it is immensely overbalanced ; but a failing still ; and so let it pass.

Having made this admission, which we do most readily, though most regretfully, and with a heart-felt wish that controversy may speedily mend its manners, it is an act of justice to Mr. Belsham's memory, and to the cause of Truth, to say, that there has been another charge upon him which we hold to be no fault at all, but to rank amongst his merits, and to be worthy of all imitation. He was

no disciple of Fontenelle, who, had all truth been gathered in his closed hand, would not have loosened his little finger to let out a particle of it. He had no conception of dangerous truths and useful errors. He spoke as he thought, and he wrote as he spoke. He had faith in truth, and left its tendency and influence to Providence. His doctrines were all exoteric, even to the opinion or the conjecture which they generated. Hence many timid Unitarians, of whom some did, but more did not, think with him on minor points, were kept in a constant state of tribulation and apprehension. They were afraid he would do harm by his speculations to the Unitarian cause. They were afraid that his notions would be ascribed to the whole body, and supposed to be part and parcel of our common creed. They were afraid that the orthodox would be scandalized, and prejudice excited; and, indeed, they were scandalized themselves; and they took care to say so, and to deprecate the mischiefs which might ensue. We must dwell a little on this point, for it has a much higher importance, and a much wider bearing, than belong to it as connected with our estimate of what Mr. Belsham was and did, although his vindication is essentially involved in the remarks which we have to offer.

It is scarcely worth while, perhaps, to draw up a catalogue of the tenets which some amongst us have been, and even at the present moment are, so anxious to disclaim for themselves, and so fearful

of having imputed to the Unitarian body, lest its comfort and growth should be thereby impeded. Yet it seems to us a very innocent one, and in most particulars, though not in all, to be founded in truth, and to harmonize better than opposite notions on the same topics, with the great principles of our faith. Moreover, for several of them very orthodox authority might be pleaded. He held the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity; which is almost, if not altogether, a doctrine of Calvinism; of which the most acute and complete defence is yet to be sought in Edwards on the Will; and which has been the conclusion at which the ablest masters of metaphysical science, whatever their religious opinions, have almost unanimously arrived. He held the homogeneity of man: not materialism, in the vulgar acceptance of the word, for that he distinctly and repeatedly disclaimed; but that man is a simple and not a compound being—his soul and body one and indivisible. It was, consequently, only by a resurrection that he thought mankind could inherit immortality. But as no one can believe in the natural immortality of the soul more firmly than he believed, and taught others to believe, in that promised resurrection, it is difficult to see why the notion should have been so obnoxious. He regarded the Lord's day as a Christian festival, and not as a Jewish Sabbath; and in this he followed Calvin himself. Indeed, the common assumption of a divine transfer of the obligations of the fourth

commandment from the last day of the week to the first, would be astonishing, could astonishment be excited by any theological assumption whatever. He agreed with Paley in distinguishing between the reasonings and the conclusions of the apostles, and regarding the former as subject to our judgment, the latter as entitled to our reception. He interpreted the first chapter of Genesis, so as to shew its theology true, but its philosophy incorrect. With a confusion very uncommon to him, he identified love to Christ with its effects, and maintained that it consisted in obedience to his commands. And he denied the locality of heaven, considering it as a state, and not a place.

Perhaps a few more offensivenesses might be gleaned from his writings; but these are the principal. Now the question is, whether Mr. Belsham failed in his duty to the Unitarian cause, and inflicted an injury upon it, by the free publication of his opinions on these topics. We answer decidedly in the negative, and that on various grounds. He never professed to speak the opinions of his brethren on these matters, nor concealed the fact that, on some of them, a large majority differed from him. There could be no identification in the case but what was *wilful*. That might be; but who can prevent deliberate misrepresentation? People might be found, no doubt, fragrant in the odour of sanctity, who would as readily falsify his living writings as his dying words. It were rather a vain hope by

any caution to disarm such minds, by any forbearance to placate them. "They say—what say they?—let them say—" as the Aberdeen Almanac has it. Moreover, in the case of a man against whom there is occasion for an outcry, it may be as easily raised about an unexpressed opinion as a published one; nay, an opinion may be imputed for the purpose. A tolerably numerous chorus once chaunted the dishonesty of concealment in a Unitarian minister for keeping back the doctrine of necessity in a public statement of Unitarian Christianity, the said minister being a devout believer in philosophical liberty. When once a man has slipped his neck out of the orthodox yoke, he is considered a runaway slave, and it is lawful for any one to have a shot at him. We speak of the common tactics of the party; it would be sad if there were not very many men amongst them of minds too pure and elevated for such practices; and it is sad that such men seldom escape unscathed themselves. "From honourable men of the world we should have received better treatment," said one of them, when to the very quick he was "wounded in the house of his friends." What then have we of the "damnable heresy" to expect at their hands? Just what we get, and which is not to be averted by any tenderness towards prejudices in matters of minor importance. The disposition is the same towards all who depart from the peculiar principles of their dogmatic system; and that disposition will be sure

to find itself a vent. The Arian with his doctrines of pre-existence and atonement fares just the same as the Humanitarian; and, the materialism or immateriality which the latter holds with, may make a difference as to the particular missile thrown at him, but none as to the probability of his being vigorously pelted. Conciliation by silence upon obnoxious opinions is one of the weakest of weak dreams, a vanity of vanities. Its usual effect has been to add to the emotions excited by bolder heretics, that of contempt for timidity, or the suspicion of insincerity.

There is a paramount duty to the consideration of who may be conciliated, or who offended, a duty to ourselves and to Truth, the duty of preserving simplicity and sincerity of character, and of promoting a knowledge of the truth on every subject in which man is interested. With this obligation no lower expediency should ever be allowed to clash. If Unitarianism be identical with religious truth, its cause must be benefited by whatever tends to the elucidation and diffusion of truth. If not, it ought to be impeded, and there would be nothing to regret in its annihilation. So felt its late Advocate, and our conviction on this topic is best expressed by a quotation from the Preface to his Letter to the Unitarian Christians in South Wales:

“But it seems that my friend has been informed that what Mr. B. has said on the subject of the Sabbath, ‘has injured the cause of Unitarianism in South Wales.’ I

am sorry for it ; but when I see it to be my duty to assert what I believe to be important truth, or to oppose popular error, it is not my custom to inquire who will like it, or who will dislike it ; what party will be offended and weakened, or what will be gratified and promoted by it. My sole object is, at least it is my desire that it should ever be, to approve myself to conscience and to God. As to the acceptance and success of my honest, however humble, exertions, I am willing to leave it in the hands of Him who will carry on his own cause in the way and by the instruments which he shall himself select and qualify for the work. I am satisfied to have had it in my heart."

This is alike manly and pious. To cherish this spirit in Unitarians does more good to their cause, and to them, than can ever be balanced by evils resulting from the offence which some take, and others affect to take, from the plainest speaking. The suppressed opinion, the remote allusion, the delicate implication, the ambiguous phrase, the refuge of Scripture language adopted in one sense by the writer, but probably interpreted in another by the reader, all these he held in scorn as questionable practices or unworthy artifices. He wished to make no proselytes, to conciliate no favour, to avert no odium, by such means. And if the dexterity which they imply may sometimes appear to do good, it is only a fallacious and evanescent appearance. Our cause is really weakened by the converts which can be thus obtained, and the hollow truce which can be thus patched up. What is still worse, is its corrupting influence upon ourselves.

It bringeth a snare. It enfeebles the perception of the beauty and the worth of Christian simplicity. Covered from detection, even by the individual's own conscience perhaps, under the abused names of Prudence, Moderation, Candour, and Charity, it degenerates into indifference in principle and cajolery in practice. And where this tendency is happily held in check by strong principles and confirmed habits, it yet renders useless, and sometimes worse than useless, those who were qualified by attainments, character, and station, to promote largely the spread of pure religion.

If there have not been wanting instances, among Unitarians, of a zeal which has overstepped the boundaries of Christian charity and of good manners—but which there is always also amongst us an adequate moral power to rebuke and repress—it is by the opposite error that a far greater injury has been inflicted. The congregations which have dwindled and declined have been those in which Unitarianism was *not* preached; in which by a systematic avoidance of its peculiarities, and abstinence from controversy, the influence of the pulpit was enfeebled, so that the aged became lethargic, and the young went into the world ignorant and undecided, an easy prey to the sceptic or the fanatic, or still more frequently to the all-absorbing Establishment. Where those peculiarities have been plainly, zealously, and judiciously exhibited, a very different result has been produced. In proportion as Unitarian preachers

have been preachers of Unitarianism, they have seldom been without reason, even amid all the obloquy and opposition which they had to encounter, for rejoicing in the fruit of their labours. Had Mr. Belsham been in this respect like unto some very excellent but very mistaken men among his contemporaries, the Chapel in Essex Street would have been like unto their chapels also; his voice would soon have become "the voice of one crying in the wilderness;" and at his death the doors might have been closed, or have only opened to receive some fanatic reviler of his doctrines and his memory. He chose a more excellent way; and the path of duty proved also that of success.

Let sects enforce uniformity, and chain the mouths and the minds of their members—it is for Unitarians to cherish independence of thought by the free expression of individual opinions. The spirit of Unitarian Christianity is, so far, mistaken by those of us to whom the publication of individual peculiarities of opinion is a theme of complaint or of regret. The worth of Truth, if not altogether dependent upon, is yet materially enhanced by, its being a personal acquisition. Religionists have fallen, at least practically, into the gross absurdity of making *Thought* a social act. They adopt and reject opinions *en masse*. The creed of the party is every thing; the opinions of the individual nothing. They do not exercise their minds by themselves and for themselves. Take twenty members

of a Calvinistic Church, and ask each of them twenty questions out of the Assembly's Catechism, and you will get the same answers. This could not happen if they came by their notions fairly. It is as unnatural as if all the features of all their faces were indistinguishable and identical. Did every mind, as it ought, abstract itself from social influences in its religious contemplations, we should see as much diversity of mental as of corporeal feature. The one class of differences would no more excite contention and recrimination than the other. Through them all, the identity of our spiritual nature, like the identity of our physical nature, would assert its rights, and maintain its influence, and ensure as much uniformity as is needful or useful. Individual mind would then obtain its freest and fullest development, and Christianity become to each a personal religion and not a party profession. In this freedom the first Christians flourished; and only in its restoration can the gospel be glorified by the full display of its ennobling influence on human mind and character. To possess so much of it as we have, and to exercise it so much as we do, is the honourable distinction of the Unitarian body. Ill should we be repaid for its loss by any closeness of union, increase of strength, or concentration of effort, as a party, which we might thereby attain.

As with reference to Mr. Belsham's services as a preacher and lecturer, rather than as an author, we shall presently have to advert to some of his occa-

sional publications, and to his two volumes of Sermons, we close here our notice of him in the latter capacity. The list of his publications is, in itself, no mean eulogy. It shews the variety of subjects to which his attention was directed, but all of which he contemplated and treated in their connexion with Unitarian Christianity. It shews his unfailing promptness whenever a favourable opportunity was afforded for exposing error or advancing truth. It shews the courage which shunned no encounter, whatever vantage ground of adventitious circumstances the adversary might possess. It shews the unabated perseverance with which, through the nearly forty years from his conversion to his death, he fought the good fight until he finished his course, having kept the faith, and never forfeited his trust by either carelessness or cowardice. This was good and faithful service. There should be a response in our hearts to the approving voice of his Master and Judge, pronouncing, as we trust, his welcome into the joy of his Lord.

“It was Mr. Belsham’s decided conviction,” says the author of the ‘Humble Tribute,’ “that religious teachers should be men of education. He thought that the value of learning and intelligence in a Christian minister can scarcely be overrated. Upon these qualifications, with a divine blessing, he mainly rested his hopes of the speedier diffusion of pure Christian truth, and he esteemed them the best securities against a narrow-minded and repulsive bigotry on the one hand, and a wild and mischievous fanaticism on the other.”—P. 15.

The situation which Mr. Belsham occupied as a preacher demanded of him a very different selection, and a much more extensive range of subjects, from that which the same sense of duty and desire of usefulness would have prescribed in a humbler sphere of exertion. We know that the gospel is the same to the ignorant and the educated, those who by habit or circumstances are precluded from much mental labour, and those who live in the continued and vigorous exercise of their intellectual faculties. But we also know that the public instructor of the latter class, or of a congregation in which they form a large proportion, will prove himself incompetent or unfaithful if he restrict himself to the elementary topics, the obvious reasonings, the simple style, and the homely illustrations, which are most, or only, appropriate in discourses addressed to the former class. Very different were the weapons with which Paul "fought with beasts at Ephesus," and those with which, at Athens, he confronted the master spirits of the age. Seldom, indeed, can an auditory be collected occupying a higher rank in the intellectual scale than that which habitually assembled to attend Mr. Belsham's ministrations. And he "fed them with food convenient for them." He adopted the modes of reasoning, so far as they are fair and just, in which such minds delight, and with which they are conversant. He grappled with the difficulties to which such minds are most exposed in connexion with the general truth and the particular

doctrines of natural and revealed religion. Nor was his preaching less moral for being intellectual, less practical for being speculative, less spiritual for being argumentative, or less devotional in its tendency for being excursive in its topics. The way to the hearts of such hearers is through their heads. Their understandings must be enlightened before their feelings can be moved, and their judgments must be convinced before their lives can be influenced. His very manner had its peculiar propriety, and contributed to the unity and power of the result. We subjoin the descriptions of it given by Mr. Aspland and Mr. Kentish.

“In the pulpit, there was in our friend the dignity that belongs to manly simplicity. He practised no arts in preaching. There was an interesting repose in his manner. A distinct enunciation, and a clear and steady tone of voice, allowed the hearer to receive calmly and to meditate freely upon the matter of discourse.”—Aspland’s Sermon, p. 49.

“As a preacher,” says Mr. Kentish, “Mr. Belsham was truly eminent. Witness those occasional and those collected sermons, which are either in your possession, or to which you have the means of ready access: witness, too, the numerous individuals, and among these many of your class, whose privilege it has been to have heard, at any time, the yet living teacher. Independently on the singular excellencies of his style and his arrangement, on his powers of happy illustration and forcible reasoning, this rare advantage belonged to his delivery, that it was exactly suited to the nature and the manner of his compositions. It was correct, grave, distinct, and expressive, on fit occasions, of genuine emotion; while it never di-

verted the attention of the audience from the subject and the argument to the speaker. His eloquence therefore was the eloquence of thought and feeling; admitting no tinsel and glare, and no artificial pomp. Whatever topics he selected for his public addresses, he treated with his characteristic luminousness and talent—affording large stores of information within a narrow compass—and if, of late, the tenor of his preaching was more critical and controversial than might have suited every hearer, the peculiarity, we must remember, arose from the nature of his situation, and the direction of his studies: nor did he lose sight of the devotional and practical uses to which his themes of discourse might be applied.”—Pp. 18, 19.

If the concluding words of this extract be meant not merely to describe the construction of Mr. Belsham's sermons, but to characterize their spirit and tendency, they fall short, in our apprehension, of rendering full justice, which certainly could not be the intention of their excellent and able author. There can be no occasion to tell him that the practical inferences at the end of a discourse are no measure of its moral power. But it may not be amiss to offer a word or two in vindication of Mr. Belsham's claim to an appellation which many were disposed to withhold from him, we mean that of a Practical Preacher. It is only as that title is sometimes applied, or rather misapplied, that his right to it must be relinquished. There are few things more useless than the dull essays on trite topics which are often termed, exclusively, practical preaching; which state what every body knows, affirm what nobody denies, and recommend

what all approve ; which impart no instruction, and leave no impression ; whose character is a negation, whose effect is slumber, and whose destiny is oblivion. In Mr. Belsham's youth there was plenty of this ; and some yet hold it in lingering regard. It never has been, nor can be, influential. The ordinary duties of ordinary life, on which this class of preachers was accustomed to dilate, are pretty well known even to the least instructed frequenters of our places of worship. What they need, what all need, is *motive*. The path is plain enough before them, and what the preacher has to do is to find and apply the power to impel them therein. And what can he have recourse to for this purpose but Christian doctrine ? His office is to *teach* ; to make his hearers *wise unto salvation*. His chief business with ethics is to enlighten them as to the nature of moral obligation, to trace its bearings, and on proper occasions to insist at large on those duties to which the prejudices of society particularly oppose themselves. A dry detail of the common duties and decencies of life can scarcely ever be more than a mere waste of time. The hearer admits it all, for he knew it all before ; but it does not make him think, and it does not make him feel, and therefore it cannot make him act. The real practical preaching is not that which is so called for no better reason than that it *relates* to the practice of our duty, but that which tends to *promote* the practice of our duty. This tendency may exist, and ought to exist, in

every sermon which is preached ; and it may often be found in the highest degree in discourses which have no formal application, and which make no distinct mention of any particular duty whatever. Whatever renders a man's faith more firm, more clear, more pure ; whatever increases the sublimity and loveliness of his conceptions of the Deity, and deepens the sense of his presence ; whatever stimulates his intellect to the honest and active pursuit of truth, the truth by which the heart is sanctified ; whatever occupies the imagination with the beauty and the grandeur of goodness, and with pictures of the blessedness which it enjoys and diffuses ; whatever calls forth holy emotion, feelings of penitence, gratitude, humility, and love to God and man—that, pre-eminently, is practical preaching, and that Mr. Belsham's Sermons shew us may be done by a strain of preaching which many would think too speculative, too metaphysical, too controversial, too exclusively doctrinal, to be tolerated in a Christian pulpit. It is difficult for us to imagine the individual who can rise from the candid and attentive perusal of his published volumes of Sermons without much being done thereby towards making him a wiser and a better man.

Mr. Belsham ascended the pulpit to impart knowledge. His sermons are full of instruction and information. Facts, which it must have cost him much time and labour to collect, he could compress with admirable skill into the compass of a single

discourse, or a short series; and his arrangement was always judicious, his statements always luminous. Specimens of the masterly manner in which he discharged this part of his duty may be seen in the sermons on the Cessation of Miraculous Powers, on the Fall of Babylon as the accomplishment of Prophecy, the Progress of Error concerning the Person of Christ, the Sufferings of Unitarians in former Times, the Progress of Intellectual, Moral, and Religious Improvement during the late Reign, the Present State of Religious Parties, &c., &c.

What has been already said of the manner may be applied to the matter of his discourses, as to their influence in disposing to calm and serious reflection. He always appeared as one "breathing thoughtful breath." His composition holds on a firm and steady march, with frequent intervals at which, to estimate the progress made, and the course to be pursued. He presents a thought or argument to the mind in so distinct a form as to ensure its admission; he allows it to sink and find its resting-place, and become a firm basis for his next reflection before he proceeds; and then he adds another and another consideration, alike distinct and weighty, till the solid, and massy, and moveless pile stands in its full proportions, an edifice of Christian faith and hope, founded on the rock of personal conviction, and proof against the storms of life.

It was the uniform object of his preaching to fix in the mind, and to pervade the mind with, those

simple and great principles which are the essence of religious truth. While the unity, the attributes, and the universal providence of God, and the mission and resurrection of Christ, were frequently brought forward as distinct subjects, he never preached without some or all of them being present to his own thoughts, and, by the conduct of his discourse, made present also to the thoughts of his hearers. What a plain, fearless, comprehensive, sublime, and conclusive view of the doctrine of Providence is that contained in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth sermons of his second volume! He always excelled in his treatment of, and his allusions to, this all-comprehensive topic. He justly estimated its importance, the security which it affords to religious faith, the energy which it imparts to righteous action, and the consolation of which it is the unfailing source.

Rightly did he call his "*Discourses Doctrinal and Practical*," for although the two volumes contain scarcely a sermon which some would term so, nothing in the old style of common-place ethical exposition, yet are they thoroughly imbued with filial reverence towards the Deity, and unbounded charity for mankind, and continually illustrate his definition of Virtue, that it is the means of happiness—and of Vice, that it is the certain source of misery. The man who spreads such feelings and convictions is the true preacher of righteousness.

In these times the preacher *must* carry contro-

versy into the pulpit if he would keep scepticism and error out of the congregation. The extent of the necessity must, of course, depend upon the peculiar character and circumstances of his auditory. Even in the most favourable situation, some exposure of error may have its use, and be required, for the sake of producing a more clear comprehension and just appreciation of truth. The peculiarities of Mr. Belsham's situation at Essex Street were evidently such as to justify, and even render obligatory upon him, a more frequent pulpit discussion of controverted points than would be expedient in any other settled minister of our denomination. He did not fail of his duty ; nor does it appear that he exceeded its requirements.

Mr. Belsham shewed the judgment and zeal which were so prominent in his character, in the advantage which he took of particular occasions, such as the meetings of societies, public events, the deaths of eminent individuals, &c. Amongst his occasional compositions, the sermon on "The Importance of Truth," preached in behalf of the Hackney College, has been deservedly and pre-eminently distinguished. There are few of them, if any, which do not richly merit preservation. However local or temporary the circumstances which led him to discourse on a subject, he so treated it as to produce an intrinsic and permanent interest. Sermon XIII. of the second volume, occasioned by the extraordinary weather of the winter of 1813-14,

may be referred to, as an instance of this kind, in addition to many which were separately published. His published Funeral Sermons are, in general, masterly delineations of the characters of the individuals whom he thus commemorated. To this class also belong his publications in favour of Religious Liberty, which always had in him a strenuous advocate. He claimed it as well for the Catholic at the one extreme, and the Unbeliever at the other, as for all those whose opinions fill up the intermediate space. And his efforts in this sacred cause were always made when they were most needed. He was in the field with the foremost ; he was in the conflict when it was at the hottest.

There is one point on which it must be conceded that he erred, though his error has been by many overrated and misrepresented. He thought that the State might usefully patronize the gospel. His notions on this subject first appeared in his Letter to Lord Sidmouth, on the famous attempt of that minister in 1811 ; and they were fully developed in the three sermons occasioned by the prosecution of Carlile in November, 1819, and entitled, " Christianity Pleading for the Patronage of the Civil Power, but Protesting against the Aid of Penal Laws." It is true, that his project of an Establishment is as comprehensive and as inoffensive as an Establishment can well be ; and that the principle for which he contends is, in fact, conceded by those of the Dissenting body who are parties to the re-

ception of the *Regium Donum*, even in its present form of a Parliamentary Grant; but it is, nevertheless, surprising that he should ever have lost the strong conviction which he once felt, that the magistrate can only injure religion by his interference—that his patronage is pollution. On this subject his first thoughts are, in our estimation, much better than his second thoughts. And it is remarkable, that he republished the passage, which we are about to quote, after the Letter to Lord Sidmouth. It is in the third edition of the Review of Wilberforce, published in 1813.

“Mr. W.’s assertion is nevertheless true. ‘Christianity has always thriven under persecutions.’ The number of rational Christians, who, rejecting all human additions to divine revelation, adhere faithfully to the simplicity of truth, was never so great as at present. And it is still a progressive cause. May it never be impeded in its course by the injudicious support of civil authority! For I acknowledge, that my idea of a civil establishment of the Christian religion is diametrically opposite to that of Mr. W. The system which he calls Christianity, may indeed be ‘embodied in an establishment which is intimately blended, and hath a common interest, with civil institutions.’ But the kingdom of Christ ‘is not of this world,’ and his doctrine shall reign triumphant when all human systems, with the authorities which support them, shall vanish ‘like the baseless fabric of a vision.’

“The immediate tendency of a civil establishment of religion is to obstruct the progress of Christian principles, and of sound morals. When a system, whether true or false, is once established, and the profession of it is paid for out of the public purse, all inquiry is at an end. In-

tegrity, and the love of truth, yield to indolence, pride, and bitter zeal, against those who attack, not the doctrines of religion, but those of the public creed. An established priesthood is, in its very nature, a persecuting order. There has been no exception to this rule. Heathen and Christian, Jew and Mahometan, Papist and Protestant, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, when in power, have all breathed the same fiery, intemperate spirit; a few enlightened individuals only excepted. Men who are engaged to defend an established system are, from that very circumstance, engaged to discourage inquiry, and to oppose truth, unless (which is not often the case) truth should happen to be the established doctrine."—Pp. 153, 154.

We cannot help wishing that Mr. Belsham had remained of this mind to the last. That he did not, was owing to no unworthy motive; he gained no popularity with any party by the change, but was censured by many; and his scheme of a modified Establishment was accompanied by a noble and well-timed protest against the visiting of Unbelief, in any case whatever, with the infliction of pains and penalties.

The influence of Mr. Belsham's ministry was largely enhanced by two practices, which he pursued through many years, viz. the Exposition of the Scriptures, and the delivery of Systematic Lectures to Young Persons.

To the first we are indebted for his great work on Paul's Epistles. Had there been no such result, the immediate effect upon his hearers' minds, in giving them a clear and connected view of the

meaning of the sacred writers, and in imparting information; removing difficulties, and introducing remarks, to an extent which the structure of a sermon will not allow, would have amply recompensed his labours, and been a sufficient eulogy upon his procedure.

His lectures always excited a strong interest, and are spoken of by those who attended them as affording delight and instruction of the highest order. Many of his publications first existed in this form. An enumeration of the subjects of the courses which he delivered at Essex Street, in the order of their delivery, will shew that they constituted a complete system of divinity, and embraced every thing connected with pulpit instruction which could come within his duty to teach, or be desirable for his hearers to learn.

The courses, as delivered in successive seasons, were as follows :

1. The *Evidences*, External and Internal, of the Jewish and the Christian Revelation. The substance of these lectures was published.
2. *Inspiration*; the Claims of Jesus and his Apostles to it; the Degree and Limits in which it may be attributed to the Writings of the New Testament.
3. The *Text* of the New Testament; its Corruptions; means of its Restoration. Published, in substance, in the Introduction to the Improved Version.
4. The *Person of Christ*; the first of a series on the Doctrines of Revelation; published in the *Calm*

Inquiry. 5. *The Holy Spirit*. 6. *The Atonement*. 7. *The Doctrines of Original Sin, Election, &c.* 8. *The Constitution of a Christian Church, and the Positive Institutions of the Christian Religion*. Published, at least in part, in "Christianity Pleading for the Patronage of the Civil Power," and in the "Plea for Infant Baptism." 9. *The Nature and Foundation of Virtue and Moral Obligation*, also published; and, 10. *The Phenomena of the Human Mind*; concluding with a review of the natural arguments for the doctrine of a future life, for the purpose of shewing that the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our hope of immortality. One season afterwards was occupied with a recapitulatory view of the whole, "arranged in proper order, and according to their natural connexion," and prefaced with two sermons, which were published, on *The Love of Truth*, and, *The Benefits arising from Theological Controversy*. And thus closed this noble and useful portion of his public labours.

Mr. Belsham was in fact *the Tutor* of the junior members of his congregation; though who was there of the mature, the aged, the best informed, that might not profit abundantly, as so many did, by the instructions which he gave? It seemed like the voluntary and gratuitous prolongation of an office which he had held in earlier life, so honourably to himself, and so advantageously to others. We may apply to it much of the judicious and

grateful praise of him in that capacity with which one of his pupils has consecrated the memory of a relation which reflects lustre upon both.

“The office of a tutor in most seminaries of education, certainly in those which Mr. Belsham superintended, has two parts—the delivery of appropriate instruction, and the exercise of faithful discipline. For his most exemplary fulfilment of his duty, under both these divisions of it, he will be remembered, by his surviving pupils, with no common gratitude, esteem, and admiration. I could but inadequately describe from this place, nor would the attempt be proper, what he was as a lecturer; how regular and punctual, how intelligent, accurate, impartial, attractive, skilful, and impressive—with what graceful ease and fluency, and what variety and aptness of illustration, he enlarged on his subjects and his text books—and with how much address, talent, and knowledge of character he ascertained the proficiency of the several members of his classes! But are there not those of us, my brethren, who owe yet higher obligations to his memory? For he was most anxious that we should be ‘wise unto salvation:’ and he laboured to inspire us with supreme love to God and Christ, and religious truth and goodness. Who, among that portion of my hearers, to whom I now immediately turn—who of us—can forget what were justly styled his *devotional* lectures, so calculated, under God’s blessing, to render us firm, yet conciliatory, pious, and sober-minded, yet actively kind and useful? The mansion where I first and chiefly knew him, in the character of a tutor, was the abode of order and of concord: the rules of the house were impartially and wisely administered; and if, among our number, any deemed authority to have been excessive or misplaced, it was not long before our reflections made us fully sensible of our error. So, I conceive, it will, usually, if not always, be, when the original or the

delegated authority of a parent is lodged in capable hands, and exerted over ingenuous minds. I have noticed the fact, not only in grateful recollection of my honoured tutor, but, further, in the hope that the statement will not be altogether lost on my young friends of this society and circle."—Kentish's Sermon, Pp. 16—18.

One most important service was rendered by Mr. Belsham to the cause of Unitarian Christianity, of a different description from those which have been adverted to in the course of our remarks, to which we would now direct the reader's attention. He was the founder of the first Unitarian Association in this country. For a statement of the principles on which it was established, and the objects contemplated, we must again have recourse to his *Memoirs of Lindsey*.

"In the year 1791 was formed the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, and the Practice of Virtue, by the Distribution of Books. The object of this society was two-fold:—the first was, that the few who then professed the unpopular doctrine of the unrivalled supremacy of God, and that the Father alone is to be worshiped, and of the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, might have some common bond of union, that they might know and support one another, and that they might thus publish their profession to the world, and excite that serious inquiry which would lead to the diffusion of truth. The second object of the society was, to print and circulate, at a cheap rate, books which were judged to be best calculated to propagate right views of the Christian doctrine, and to apply it to the direction of the practice. It was proposed at first to combine this Society with that for promoting the Knowledge of the Scriptures, of which some account has been already given. But this com-

bination was opposed by Mr. Lindsey and Dr. Priestley, who thought it best that the societies should be kept distinct; and as the writer of this Memoir was the person who first suggested the plan, it was allotted to him to draw up the preamble to the Rules. And as the object of the society was by no means to collect a great number of subscribers, but chiefly to form an association of those who thought it right to lay aside all ambiguity of language, and to make a solemn public profession of their belief in the proper Unity of God, and of the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, in opposition both to the Trinitarian doctrine of Three Persons in the Deity, and to the Arian hypothesis of a created Maker, Preserver, and Governor of the world, it was judged expedient to express this article in the preamble in the most explicit manner. This was objected to by some, as narrowing too much the ground of the society, which, as they thought, ought to be made as extensive as possible. But the objection was easily over-ruled, it being the main intention and design of the society to make a solemn, public, and explicit avowal of what, in the estimation of its members, was Christian truth; to enter a protest against the errors of the day; to unite those who held the same principles, and who were scattered up and down in different parts of the country, in one common bond of union; and to encourage them to hold fast their profession, and to stand by and support one another."—Pp. 296—298.

This was a good beginning in the application of a principle by which so much has been, and so much more will yet be, accomplished in the religious world. If "organized masses" do not afford the best means for the discovery of Truth by the individuals constituting them; which no one, we suppose, will contend that they do; they are never-

theless inestimable in the facilities which they provide for the profession of opinions, for exciting attention, for disseminating information, and thus, eventually, for the extension of the Truth which has been previously ascertained.

That error as well as truth may be propagated by such means is certainly not a reason for their being neglected. The advocates for error *will* employ them whether we do or not. And why should they be left in the sole possession of so powerful a weapon? Unless its use were unlawful, which it would be no easy task to shew on the ground either of Scripture or expediency, the energy with which they wield it demands of us a proportionate activity, that we may at least do as much for the truth of heaven as others do for human inventions. But in the long run its employment must avail more to the cause of truth than to that of error. It increases the amount of reading and of thought upon religious topics. The tendency of that which does so must be good.

At that time, much more than at present, such an opportunity as that afforded by the Unitarian Society was needed in order to enable individuals to make public profession of their faith. Very few congregations had then adopted the term Unitarian. In many of those to which it is now applied, a considerable proportion of the attendants were only slowly advancing towards Unitarian opinions. In truth, as well as for the sake of peace; of peace with

one another, to say nothing of the world around them; they could only be designated Presbyterian or General Baptist Congregations. Many individuals too, whose character and station entitled them to some weight with the community, lived out of reach of even these congregations. The public and social profession of Unitarianism may, as to many of its important results, be said to have commenced with the Unitarian Society. It summoned all the separated and solitary witnesses of the truth, throughout the land, to bear their united testimony. It was as the uplifting of a banner in the name of the Lord; and proudly has it floated since, in sunshine and in storm, in conflict and in triumph. They may be reckoned few in number who gather around it yet; they are so, compared with the legions of orthodoxy; but they are a host compared with the little flock which it then assembled.

The scattered situation of Unitarians rendered some such union desirable not only as the public pledge and profession of their faith to others, but as the source of enjoyment, improvement, and mutual encouragement to themselves. None but persons who have lived without the means of intercourse with those who are like-minded with themselves, on the most important matters, can duly appreciate even the comfort and utility which such a degree of fellowship as this may bestow upon isolated individuals. Its meetings replenish with

oil the lamp which must be, for the rest of the year, a light shining in the darkness. And not infrequently has private friendship originated in this public intercourse and harmony, friendship alike honourable and happy, useful and enduring.

The alarm, the opposition, the enmity, the abhorrence, in which Unitarianism and Unitarians are so often held, require of them union and mutual support, unless they are content that, of many of their number, insult and injury should be the portion. Nor can it be expected that proselyting should be carried on to any extent without a system of co-operation. Towards these objects, however, comparatively little was done, directly, by the Unitarian Society. In its consequences it did much. Not only was its plan imitated in the country; by the Western Unitarian Society, the Southern, and various others; but in the metropolis general societies were formed for the promotion of objects excluded from its plan; as the Unitarian Fund, for the employment of popular preaching, and the Association for protecting the Civil Rights of Unitarians; both of which, together with the parent Institution, are now united in the British and Foreign Unitarian Association.

With the exception of the Western, all these Institutions differed in one particular from the original Unitarian Society. They employed the term Unitarian in its widest acceptance, as denoting merely a believer in the one God the Father. Mr.

Belsham has adverted, in the passage just quoted, to the objection which was made at the time to his introducing the doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ into the preamble of the Rules of the Society. The objection gathered strength by time, and at intervals occasioned much discussion, and in the later years of his life Mr. Belsham found but few who agreed with him in this restriction. It is one which ill accords with the comprehensive spirit of Unitarian Christianity. The less there is amongst us of sectarian division and subdivision the better. We cannot afford to waste our strength, nor would we narrow our minds, by petty distinctions. Enough is done when we have distinguished ourselves from the enemies and the corrupters of the gospel. For the sake of truth, of union, of charity, and of individual freedom of opinion, there ought to be no party lines of demarcation between those who can assemble around the same altar to worship the same paternal God.

The restriction of the term Unitarian was probably endeared to Mr. Belsham by the example of Priestley and Lindsey; by the conduct of some Arians of the last generation in reference to the Trinitarian controversy; and, above all, by the circumstances of his own conversion. The change of opinion on the person of Christ was the great change to him. It was the crisis of his life. He found that different views of the other controverted points followed by a logical necessity, in rapid suc-

cession, and with comparative facility. The doctrine of the superhumanity of Christ seemed to him the one neck which supported the hydra-heads of corrupt doctrine, all of which might thus be struck off at a single blow. But several starting points might be selected from which the road is equally open, easy, sure, and speedy, to the same result. In fact, it matters but little which link be first broken from the chain of corruption. Original Sin, Total Depravity, Vicarious Suffering, Eternal Torments; any one of these will, if the inquirer persist in his course, be as sure to drag all the rest after it as the doctrine of the Godhead of Christ. There is no reason why it, any more than the rest, should be raised to the same degree of importance, apparently at least, as the fundamental truth of all rational Theology, the proper Unity of God. That tenet, like the Being to whom it relates, should remain alone. Or if the occasion calls for some addition, there is one other doctrine, though even that is not yet held by all Unitarians, which claims, at the very least, a full equality with our views of the person of Christ; we mean the doctrine of Universal Restoration. In its logical bearing upon other doctrines, in its connexion with the Divine character, and in its influence upon the whole spirit and tendency of our religious system, the proposition that all men shall be finally holy and happy, cannot yield in importance, still less in interest, to the proposition that Jesus of Nazareth

was strictly and properly a human being. There is a violation of "the proportion of faith" in any profession which includes the last mentioned tenet while it excludes the former.

This restriction in its avowed principle, together with the amount of the subscription, the limitation of its objects, and various particulars in its management, (on which no censure is meant to be implied by this allusion,) prevented the Unitarian Book Society from ever becoming very popular either in the degree of support which it received, or in the extent of influence which it exercised. In both respects it was soon far surpassed by the Unitarian Fund. To this Institution Mr. Belsham was a very liberal contributor, and his support of it was alike valuable to the Society and honourable to himself; for, as he says, (*Memoirs of Lindsey*, p. 308,) "this being a new experiment, in which unlearned ministers were chiefly employed, many of the more learned and regular members of the Unitarian body stood aloof, and declined to give countenance to a proceeding, of the prudence and propriety of which they stood in doubt." And had Mr. Belsham consulted only his own tastes and habits, there can be little doubt that he would have "stood aloof" also. In conversation on plans of popular proselytism he often declared, that "his feelings were against them, but that his judgment was for them." When we observe how many there are who, in similar circumstances, pursue a different course of action;

and how many more who, instead of honestly acknowledging the discrepancy, persuade themselves that a mere dislike generated by their habits is really the disapproval of their minds ; we shall not deem this a very trifling instance, on his part, of conscientiousness and steady adherence to principle. Useful efforts have generally been more crippled by the doubts, fears, and lukewarmness of avowed friends, than by the active and expected opposition of known enemies. There is no such impenetrable ignorance in the people, there is no such power in fanaticism, as can stay the incessant and rapid progress of Unitarianism, if Unitarians will but make the requisite sacrifices and exertions. Our cause has advanced, of late, rather indirectly than directly ; in the modified creeds and modified spirit of other denominations, rather than in the increase of our own numbers. An advance of this description must be contemplated with complacency ; it is indicative of truth ; it is likely to be permanent and progressive ; there is much of good in its immediate consequences ; and it is predictive of the final, universal triumph of gospel simplicity. But it is independent of our exertions, and ought not to satisfy our desires. We may greatly accelerate its ratio, and add to it a large amount of direct success, *if we will*. And whenever the partakers of Mr. Belsham's likings and dislikings as to the means, shall arrive at his convictions, and sacrifice their tastes, as he did his, on the altar of Utility, which

in this case is that of Duty, we shall then *so will* the popular dissemination of our opinions as to exhibit the geometrical ratio of Malthus in the theological world, with this happy difference, that the spiritual means of subsistence, the blessed influences of truth on the mind's health and vigour, will be any thing but diminished by a more extended participation.

It is to be hoped that the biographer of Mr. Belsham will do, what it is impossible to attempt in so slight a sketch as this—that he will delineate the state of Unitarianism in this country at the time of Mr. Belsham's conversion; compare, or rather contrast, with that, its condition at the termination of his public life; and estimate the influence of his mind, character, and labours, in bringing about the extensive and felicitous change thus presented to the view. In closing our own humble, but grateful, endeavour to estimate the extent of his services to our cause, we have only now to mention those which he may be considered as having rendered involuntarily, and perhaps unconsciously; those which we owe not so much to what he did or intended, as to what he was; those which arose from the providential combination of his peculiar character with the peculiar circumstances of the period through which he lived and acted.

Mr. Belsham's mind offered many indications to the attentive observer of having been raised by assiduous cultivation to the rank it occupied. It

had no marks of native superiority. He was not one of those very happy, or very unhappy, individuals on whom some peculiarity of organization, or of early association, confers a patent of mental nobility, with all its heavy responsibilities and its countless perils. The application of the term Genius to his intellect would be manifestly absurd. He had little originality; he had less imagination; but he had unfailing diligence. There was no science which he might not have mastered; nor any, perhaps, the boundaries of which he would ever have extended. He had no invention. He could appropriate thought, but not originate it. His mind was as a garden, which he kept clear of weeds, and rich in its soil; the seed which was sown therein sprung up, and the trees which had been transplanted there struck root and flourished; but the eye met nothing of spontaneous growth; nothing of the exuberance and magnificence of an American forest, where wild nature puts forth, and luxuriates in, her own beauty, wealth, and glory.

But how untiring must have been the labour with which he possessed himself of whatever the learned had collected, or the wise had thought, on the topics which interested him! His mind might not be above the need of toil, but it never shrunk from any toil for which there was occasion. And he was provided, either by nature in the harmonious construction of his faculties, or by his own strong and active sense of its necessity, with the storehouse

of a capacious and retentive memory, where his multifarious acquisitions were safely lodged, well arranged, and ever ready for useful employment.

His judgment was eminently clear and sound. He stood high amongst those who, "by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." He was never encumbered or bewildered by his acquirements, as so many mere men of learning are. He was not a man to be convinced by the last or the loudest speaker. He would never, like an orthodox divine whom we knew, and who once ventured to break a lance with him, have twice read over, alternately, the conflicting Treatises of Fell and Farmer on Demoniacs, each time becoming of the author's opinion before he had finished the volume. He "weighed all things in the balances of the sanctuary;" and he kept them always adjusted for that purpose.

His consciousness of the accuracy with which his intellect was accustomed to decide, gave him that sense of power which is so evident in his mode of treating the objections and arguments of adversaries. He could afford to do ample justice, and more than justice, to the pleadings of an opponent. He could afford to eke out antagonist weakness with some of his own strength; and put in the clearest and strongest light the difficulty which he was about to demolish. The firm grasp which he had of the subjects on which he wrote would have enabled and disposed him to do this, even had he

merely struggled as a disputant for victory, and apart from his candour and his paramount love of truth. To collect materials for thought and decision with diligence, to appreciate them with accuracy, and to select from them with admirable discrimination, were faculties so essential to his mental constitution, that he exercised them on that side of a question which he opposed, as well as on that which he adopted; and notwithstanding occasional ebullitions of controversial ardour, few writers have ever dealt so fully and so fairly with disputed points in theology.

Nor could any man ever feel less self-reproach in offering the well-known petition in the collect; for what he read he marked, and what he marked he learned, and what he learned he inwardly digested. His mind possessed, to a very extraordinary degree, the faculty of assimilation. The thoughts which he derived from other men he made thoroughly his own. They became converted into intellectual nutriment; they ministered to an intellectual vigour which has seldom been sustained so well or so long.

This is the outline of a mind of great force, but not of the highest order. That would imply two kinds of power of which Mr. Belsham was comparatively destitute. He did his work by the sole agency of the understanding. He could accomplish little or nothing by means of the imagination, or of the affections. Dr. Channing's sermons were not to his taste; nor could he have had any such sym-

pathy with the most splendid of Burke's orations, or the most pathetic and impassioned pleadings of Erskine, as with the logical eloquence of Fox. He could not have commented upon the parables of Christ so excellently as he did upon the Epistles of Paul. We mean no disparagement of his eminent talents; our object is simply to shew what they were; which implies the pointing out of what they were not. In his own sphere he has probably never been surpassed; in those beyond it he had many superiors; but the combination of his and their qualities is amongst the rarest of all rare occurrences.

Mr. Belsham was peculiarly fitted for the period in which he lived. The worth of his services to the Unitarian cause is enhanced by the time and the circumstances under which they were rendered. The continued controversial efforts of such a man were needed. The work of Priestley and Lindsey required a Belsham to carry it forward to its completion. Unitarianism was yet, to the public mind, a novelty. It was regarded as something undefined, unfixed, inconsistent: one of the "bubble speculations" of that era of intellectual enterprise which succeeded the French Revolution. There was as little disposition to understand as to tolerate it. It was needful to familiarize its principles by incessant repetition; to carry them out into all their consequences, and trace them in all their bearings, immediate and remote; to shew how far it coincided with,

and where it diverged from, received systems of doctrine; to ascertain by the results of repeated discussions where its restorers had been too cautious, where too precipitate; and to indicate to the Christian world the whole extent of what was to be renounced as error and corruption, and where the basis must be laid of that temple of the Lord in which all hearts may worship God through Jesus Christ. And this was what Mr. Belsham did, pursuing his work through evil report and good report; often with little indeed to encourage his efforts save the testimony of a good conscience; but never growing weary nor fainting in his well-doing. Thank heaven, he lived to reap a noble harvest after having thus borne the heat and burden of the day.

There was a felicitous correspondence between the task which has just been described as devolving upon him, and the fearlessness, clearness, comprehension, vigour, condensation, and order, which were the distinguishing attributes of his intellect. These were the qualities, rather than the originality, the excursiveness, the enthusiasm, with which he was not gifted, that the season required. It was fit that he should be the follower of men of greater mental adventure than himself; men framed to be the detectors of ancient error, the explorers of the lost land of truth; that he should mark out, and battle for, and conquer, the regions which they discovered; and that he should be followed by men of more lively fancy and more fervid feelings to adorn

and cultivate the territory which he subdued. There are touches of sentiment and pathos in Mr. Madge's Funeral Sermon for his predecessor, which well illustrate one of the qualities included in our notion of the style of preaching which should follow the prevalence of that adopted by Mr. Belsham, and which corresponds with the era at which we are now arrived.

Dr. Priestley, Mr. Belsham, and (*absit invidia*) Dr. Channing, seem to us to exhibit very accurately and very beautifully, the successive phases of the star of Unitarianism as it ascends from the horizon to its meridian: or rather, in them are embodied the spirits of the three distinct ages which did, and which should, succeed to one another in the revival of the long-lost truth. The first epoch is one of tentative speculation. The mind is roused to a sense of the gross darkness which prevails, and turns hither and thither in search of light. It often goes far in a wrong direction, and in a right direction as often stops short of its object. Endless questionings arise, and countless speculations are indulged. Some established truths are needlessly and vainly disputed; and many new mistakes are committed in the ardour for an universal rectification of old ones. The freedom of the mind is manfully asserted; but sometimes we may almost say boyishly exercised. There is much pulling down, and a general loosening of the foundations of ancient doctrine; but with some uncertainty as to what will stand, and what

must fall. Nor does it yet appear whether the new erections will remain to be consolidated by time and hallowed by association. Yet this chaos is preparatory to a creation; the confusion must give place to order; and the principle of renovation is at work. The mind of Dr. Priestley, with its activity, its acuteness, its impetuosity, its versatility, was framed to be the representative, and the presiding spirit, of such a scene as this. He was not only an experimental chemist, but an experimental theologian. There is matter enough in his writings to destroy Sectarian creeds by scores; and to form new sects by scores also, had he gathered a body of disciples with *magister dixit* for their motto. But the period of unbounded inquiry, of proving all things, soon subsides into that of holding fast, and vindicating, that which is good. Then comes the time for selection, and definition, and demarcation, and systematic controversy, and accumulating proof. To Dr. Priestley, the universal inquirer, succeeds Mr. Belsham, the consistent controversialist. Speculation on the soundness of almost every principle gives way to the regular defence of certain fixed principles, and a series of attacks on the tenets to which those principles are opposed. Our faith thus becomes more clearly defined, more strongly contrasted with prevalent errors, more completely purified from evanescent theories, more thoroughly understood, and more firmly held. But there is yet more than this essential to the completion of

the work of religious reformation. There must be a third process, a development of the moral beauty, power, and tendencies, of the truth which had been sought so actively, and championed so ably. There must be a third epoch, analogous to that which ensues in the mind of the individual convert, who, having been occupied long enough, with inquiry first, and then with argument, addresses himself to the ultimate task of devout reflection, meditation, self-application, the development and regulation of his feelings, his imaginations, and his hopes. This is the moral harvest of all the labour which has preceded. This is the end which crowns the work. Doctrines now begin to be contemplated in their proper light, and to do their proper duty. They present themselves to the mind, not as hard propositions, but as living principles. The chaos has become a harmonized world, and that world becomes surrounded with an atmosphere; beams of light play through it; sounds of melody vibrate in it; the beauty of colour is generated by it; and man inhales it, and becomes a living soul.

It is to this last state of things that such a style of preaching as that of Dr. Channing is peculiarly adapted. There is not in him the originality and excursiveness of thought which distinguished Dr. Priestley; his intellect is perhaps less sturdy, and in some respects his philosophy less sound, than that of Mr. Belsham; but he has a stronger sense than either of the grand and the beautiful; his power is

better fitted, and more uniformly directed, to the excitement of feeling ; he cultivates the *love* of that truth which they discovered and demonstrated ; and furnishes the needful supplement to their labours by extending the dominion of pure religion from the head to the heart, and devoting himself to the display of its richness as the source of sentiments, emotions, affections, of spiritual vitality and spiritual enjoyment. Illustrated by the successive exertions of men to each of whom Providence seems to have assigned his appropriate agency, Unitarian Christianity assumes its perfect form, and we behold it as something not only to be believed, but to be felt and loved and admired and gloried in. We see exhibited its fitness for man and its fulness of blessing. No longer acting merely on the reason, it kindles up the splendour of the imagination, and around it the affections cling. How rich it appears for the supply of every want which our nature feels ! How admirable its conformity with the principles of our moral constitution ! How gracefully it descends to our weaknesses, and how tenderly it soothes our sorrows, and how amply it realizes our noblest anticipations ; and, above all, how wonderful is the elasticity (we know not what else to call it) by which it adapts itself to the most ignorant and confined understanding, and yet o'er informs the most enlightened intellect, and soars above the most exalted genius ! It helps along the feeblest of mankind, those who are lagging in the rear, and is " feet

to the lame and eyes to the blind ;” while the foremost of our race find it ever in advance, and ever hear its inspiring shout of, “ Onward ! Onward !” And thus should Unitarian Christianity be exhibited, in all the truth of its tenets and the divinity of its origin, in all its intellectual and moral grandeur, in all its tendencies to purify and elevate the character, in all its influences upon the heart and life, and in all the affinities it possesses with, and the stimulants it applies to, the indefinite progress of human improvement.

Let us not be supposed to speak more strictly, universally, and exclusively, than we intend. We only mean to characterize, in a general way, and by their prevailing features, the successive changes which seem, from the nature of the case, to belong to the process of religious reformation ; and which, though undoubtedly with a good deal of exception, of irregularity, and of anticipation, have actually presented themselves in the history of Unitarianism. We believe it to be the fact, and greatly in that fact do we rejoice, that the prevailing taste of Unitarians is best gratified by those displays of the spirit of Christianity which most tend to purify, expand, and elevate the heart. We are ready to do battle for truth whenever an assault is to be repelled, or a conquest may be made ; but our delight is to feel its power and behold its glory.

Of Mr. Belsham’s moral qualities, of his piety, integrity, and kindness, we have already spoken, in

terms borrowed from one who was evidently well qualified to bear his sorrowing testimony to them. Respect was the feeling which they were eminently adapted to excite; and which it is certain they did excite, from a very early part of his life. Hence his appointment, while yet almost a youth, to the Assistant Tutorship at Daventry; and his subsequent call to occupy the Divinity chair there and at Hackney. And hence, too, the harmonizing influence which his opinions and example had upon those portions of the Unitarian body which were likely to appear to each other as intemperately zealous or culpably indifferent. The extent to which he was identified with what may be termed the Aristocracy of Unitarianism gave so much the more worth to his hearty sanction of popular plans, and tended at once to rebuke the coldness of some and temper the ardour of others. And something of the same sort may be observed even in his politics. He was a Whig of the old school; and if in any thing he was unphilosophical, it was in a reverence for Whig Lords, almost as profound as that of David Hume for Royal Stuarts. But his feelings were ever warm and strong when rights were invaded or injustice perpetrated. And long after the most signal atrocity which has been committed with impunity in modern times, the Massacre of the Manchester Petitioners, had been consigned to oblivion by compromising and coalescing politicians, he was accustomed to refer to it, coupled with the

emphatic addition “ never to be forgotten, and never to be forgiven.”

But it is time to bring these observations to a close. They have extended themselves far beyond our original design. Nor can we conclude them better than by remarking the perfect unity which pervaded Mr. Belsham’s labours. Diversified as those labours were, and valuable as they would be, considered only as so many independent contributions to the common stock of human knowledge and goodness, it is an immense increase to their importance and worth, and consequently should be to the strength of our grateful recollection of him, that one common aim and tendency runs through them all, binding them into a consistent and complete whole, and animating them by one spirit of life and power. Bring them together ; the pile of his works, the record of his life, and one motto will serve for the complete collection : *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* In whatever department of theology, or morals, or metaphysics, or history, or controversy, he was labouring for the time ; and in whatever way—from the pulpit, the desk, or the press ; alone, or with coadjutors ; Mr. Belsham always appeared in one and the same character, the consistent advocate of Unitarian Christianity. This was the work which was given him to do ; and he did it with his might. The genuine gospel ; that gospel which exhibits the Deity in the peerless

simplicity of his nature, the undivided glory of his personal unity ; which prescribes the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth ; which teaches a providence universal in its extent, and impartial in its operations ; which affirms that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, but that whosoever feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him ; which reverences Christ the Saviour as a man whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power ; and of which the summary is, that " God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead : " this pure and undefiled Christianity ; this one thing needful, in his conviction, for human reformation and human happiness, was the main-spring of his exertions ; its promotion the object for which he wrote, preached, and lived ; and its hopes and consolations the satisfying portion of his own soul. As we value this gospel should we appreciate the labours of this faithful and diligent servant of Christ in his Master's cause. He is gone to his recompence. He has rejoined, we trust, the society he loved on earth, the Lindseys, Jebbs, Priestleys, and the rest of that illustrious band to which he belonged ; which he so long survived to represent ; and whose labours he inherited and carried onwards to their completion. We enrol his name with mournful gratitude among the worthies of our

profession, those who are as the jewels which Unitarianism has contributed to the heavenly treasury, the rays of the crown which she casts adoringly at the foot of the eternal throne. The tomb of Theophilus Lindsey covers *his* ashes also ; and around them is a host of men, of varying creeds indeed, but who, in their day and according to their light, fought the good fight of knowledge, freedom, and righteousness, and " have fallen asleep in Jesus."

LIST OF MR. BELSHAM'S PUBLICATIONS.

1. *The Evil Nature and Pernicious Tendency of Intemperate and Misguided Zeal.* A Sermon preached at a Meeting of Ministers at Rothwell, in Northamptonshire, October 4, 1775. 12mo.
2. *A Charge* delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. TIMOTHY KENRICK, at Exeter, July 28, 1785.
3. *A Charge* delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. D. B. JARDINE, at Bath, Feb. 25, 1790.
4. *The Importance of Truth, and the Duty of making an Open Profession of it.* A Discourse delivered on the 28th of April, 1790, at the Meeting-house in the Old Jewry, London.
5. *A Charge* delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. WILLIAM FIELD, of Warwick, July 12, 1790.
6. *The Importance of giving a Proper Education to the Children of the Poor,* represented in a Sermon preached at St. Thomas's, January 1, 1791.
7. *Dishonest Shame the Primary Source of the Corruptions of the Christian Doctrine.* A Sermon preached at Hackney, April 6, 1794.
8. *Knowledge the Foundation of Virtue.* A Sermon addressed to Young Persons. 1795.
9. *A Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise,* entitled "A Practical View of the prevailing religious System of professed Christians," &c. 1798.
10. *Freedom of Inquiry, and Zeal in the Diffusion of Christian Truth.* A Discourse delivered at Bristol, July 9, 1800.
11. *A Serious Caution against Popular Errors.* A Discourse addressed to Young Persons, 1801.
12. *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, and of Moral Philosophy.* To which is prefixed, A Compendium of Logic. 1801.
13. *Reflections and Exhortations* adapted to the State of the Times. A Sermon preached at Hackney, June 1, 1802.
14. *The Right and Duty of Unitarian Christians to form Separate Societies for Religious Worship.* A Sermon preached at Birmingham, July 22, 1802, at the Opening of the New Meeting House.
15. *The Study of the Scriptures* recommended, in a Discourse delivered at Newport, in the Isle of Wight, July 13, 1803.
16. *The Situation, the Prospects, and the Duties of Britons* in the present Crisis of Alarm and Danger. A Discourse delivered October 19, 1803.
17. *The Character of the Christian Teacher* delineated, and the Means of forming it represented, in a Discourse delivered at Hackney, January 8, 1804.

18. *Zeal and Fortitude in the Christian Ministry* illustrated and exemplified. A Discourse delivered at Hackney, April 8, 1804, on occasion of the Death of the Rev. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S.

19. *The Progress of Error concerning the Person of Christ*; represented in a Sermon delivered at the Unitarian Chapel in Essex Street, March 31, 1805.

20. *Adherence to Christian Truth* recommended, in a Discourse delivered to the Unitarian Congregation at Hackney, May 5, 1805, upon the Resignation of the Pastoral Office in that Society.

21. *A Vindication of certain Passages in a Discourse* on occasion of the Death of Dr. PRIESTLEY, in Reply to the Animadversions of the Rev. John Pye Smith. 1806.

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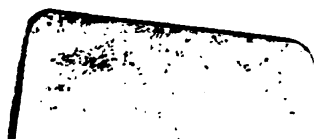
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